

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF GOD.

Having expounded in the opening chapters of the *Institutes* the sources and means of the knowledge of God, Calvin naturally proceeds in the next series of chapters (I. x, xi, xii, xiii) to set forth the nature of the God who, by the revelation of Himself in His Word and by the prevalent internal operation of His Spirit, frames the knowledge of Himself in the hearts of His people. He who expects to find in these chapters, however, an orderly discussion of the several topics which make up the *locus de Deo* in our formal dogmatics, will meet with disappointment. Calvin is not writing out of an abstract scientific impulse, but with the needs of souls, and, indeed, also with the special demands of the day in mind. And as his purpose is distinctively religious, so his method is literary rather than scholastic. In the freedom of his literary manner, he had permitted himself in the preceding chapters repeated excursions into regions which, in an exact arrangement of the material, might well have been reserved for exploration at this later point. To take up these topics again, now, for fuller and more orderly exposition, would involve much repetition without substantially advancing the practical purpose for which the *Institutes* were written. Calvin was not a man to confound formal correctness of arrangement with substantial completeness of treatment; nor was he at a loss for new topics of pressing importance for discussion. He skillfully interposes at this point, therefore, a short chapter (ch. x) in which under the form of pointing out the complete harmony with the revelation of God in nature of the revelation of God in the Scriptures—the divine authority of which in the communication of the knowledge of God he had just demonstrated—he reminds his readers of all that he had formerly said of the nature and attributes of God on the basis of natural revelation, and takes occasion to say what it re-

mained necessary to say of the same topics on the basis of supernatural revelation. Thus he briefly but effectively brings together under the reader's eye the whole body of his exposition of these topics and frees his hands to give himself, under the guidance of his practical bent and purpose, to the two topics falling under the rubric of the doctrine of God which were at the moment of the most pressing importance. His actual formal treatment of the doctrine of God thus divides itself into two parts, the former of which (ch. xi, xii), in strong Anti-Romish polemic is devoted to the uprooting of every refuge of idolatry, while the latter (ch. xiii), in equally strong polemic against the Anti-trinitarianism of the day, develops with theological acumen and vital faith the doctrine of Trinity in Unity.

It is quite true, then, as has often been remarked, that the *Institutes* contain no systematic discussion of the existence, the nature and the attributes of God.¹ And the lack of formal, systematic discussion of these fundamental topics, may, no doubt, be accounted a flaw, if we are to conceive the *Institutes* as a formal treatise in systematic theology. But it is not at all true that the *Institutes* contain no sufficient indication of Calvin's conceptions on these subjects: nor is it possible to refer the absence of formal discussion of them either to indifference to them on Calvin's

¹ Cf. Köstlin, *Calvin's Institutio*, etc., in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1868, i, pp. 61-2: "On the other hand—and this is for us the most important matter,—there is not given there any comprehensive exposition of the attributes, especially not of the ethical attributes of God, nor is any such afterwards attempted." Again, iii, p. 423: "We cannot present and follow out the doctrine of the *Institutio* on the divine nature and the divine attributes, and their relations, as a whole, as we can its doctrine of the Trinity, because Calvin himself, as we have mentioned already, has nowhere presented them as a whole." Cf. also P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, 1883, p. 11: "Neither by Zwingli nor by Calvin are there offered proofs of the existence of God" (cf. p. 16). Again, *De Godsleer van Calvijn*, 1881, p. 26: "A doctrine of the nature of God as such we do not find in Calvin." *Ibid.*, p. 38: "We find nowhere in Calvin a special section which is devoted particularly to the nature of God's attributes"; "since he gives no formal doctrine of the attributes, we find in him also no classification of the attributes."

part or to any peculiarity of his dogmatic standpoint,² or even of his theological method.³ The omission belongs rather to the peculiarity of this treatise as a literary product. Calvin does not pass over all systematic discussion of the existence, nature and attributes of God because from his theological standpoint there was nothing to say upon these topics, nor because, in his theological method, they were insignificant for his system; but simply because he had been led already to say informally about them all that was necessary for the religious, practical purpose he had in view in writing this treatise. For here as elsewhere the key to the understanding of the *Institutes* lies in recognizing their fundamental purpose to have been religious, and their whole, not coloring merely, but substance, to be profoundly religious,—in this only reflecting indeed the most determinative trait of Calvin's character.

It is important to emphasize this, for there seems to be still an impression abroad that Calvin's nature was at bottom cold and hard and dry, and his life-manifestation but a piece of incarnated logic: while the *Institutes* themselves are frequently represented, or rather misrepresented—it is difficult to believe that those who so speak of them can have read them—as a body of purely formal reasoning by which intolerable conclusions are remorselessly deduced from a set of metaphysical assumptions.⁴ Perhaps M. Ferdinand

² As Köstlin, for example, has suggested, as cited, p. 423, followed by P. J. Muller in his earlier work, *De Godsleer van Calvin*, 1881, pp. 10, 46.

³ So P. J. Muller expresses himself in his later volume—*De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvin*, 1883,—modifying his earlier view: "Köstlin asks if it does not belong to Calvin's dogmatic standpoint that he does not venture to seek after a bond between the several elements which come forward in God's many-sided relation to men. This question can undoubtedly be answered in the affirmative, although we should rather speak here of the peculiarity of Calvin's *method*." That is to say, Muller here prefers to refer the phenomenon in question to Calvin's *a posteriori* method rather than to his theological standpoint.

⁴ André Duran, *Le Mysticisme de Calvin*, 1900, p. 8, justly says: "The *Institutes* are remarkable precisely for this: the absence of speculation. It is especially with the heart that Calvin studies God in His

Brunetière may be looked upon as a not unfair representative of the class of writers who are wont so to speak of the *Institutes*.⁵ According to him, Calvin has "intellectualized" religion and reduced it to a form which can appeal only to the "reasonable", or rather to the "reasoning" man. "In that oratorical work which he called *The Institutes*", M. Brunetière says, "if there is any movement, it is not one which comes from the heart; and—I am speaking here only of the writer or the religious theorizer, not of the man—the insensibility of Calvin is equalled only by the rigor of his reasoning." The religion Calvin sets forth is "a religion which consists essentially, almost exclusively, in the adhesion of the intellect to truths all but demonstrated", and commends itself by nothing "except by the literalness of its agreement with a text—which is a matter of pure philology—and by the solidity of its logical edifice—which is nothing but a matter of pure reasoning." To Calvin, he adds, "religious truth attests itself in no other manner and by no other means than mathematical truth. As he would reason on the properties of a triangle, or of a sphere, so Calvin reasons on the attributes of God. All that will not adjust itself to the exigencies of his dialectic, he contests or he rejects . . . Cartesian before Descartes, rational evidence, logical contradiction are for him the test or the proof of truth. He would not believe if faith did not stay itself on a formal syllogism. . . . From a 'matter of the heart', if I may so say, Calvin transformed religion into an 'affair of the intellect.' "

We must not fail to observe, in passing, that even M. Brunetière refrains from attributing to Calvin's person the hard insensibility which he represents as the characteristic of his religious writings,—a tribute, we may suppose, to the relations with men; and it is by the heart that he attains to complete union of man with God." For a satisfactory discussion of the "heart in Calvin's theology" see E. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin*, etc., III (1905), pp. 560-563. Compare also the third address in Doumergue's *L'Art et le Sentiment dans l'Oeuvre de Calvin*, Geneva, 1902.

⁵ *Discours de Combat*, 1903, pp. 135-140.

religious impression which is made by Calvin's personality upon all who come into his presence, and which led even M. Ernest Renan, who otherwise shares very largely M. Brunetière's estimate of him, to declare him "the most Christian man of his age."⁶ Nor can we help suspecting that the violence of the invectives launched against the remorseless logic of the *Institutes* and of Calvin's religious reasoning in general, is but the index of the difficulty felt by M. Brunetière and those who share his point of view, in sustaining themselves against the force of Calvin's argumentative presentation of his religious conceptions. It is surely no discredit to a religious reasoner that his presentation commends his system irresistibly to all "reasonable", or let us even say "reasoning" men. A religious system which cannot sustain itself in the presence of "reasonable" or "reasoning" men, is not likely to remain permanently in existence, or at least in power among reasonable or reasoning men; and one would think that the logical irresistibility of a system of religious truth would be distinctly a count in its favor. The bite of M. Brunetière's assault is found, therefore, purely in its negative side. He would condemn Calvin's system of religion as nothing but a system of logic; and the *Institutes*, the most systematic presentation of it, as in essence nothing but a congeries of syllogisms, issuing in nothing but a set of logical propositions, with no religious quality or uplift in them. In this, however, he worst of all misses the mark; and we must add he was peculiarly unfortunate in fixing, in illustration of his meaning, on the two matters of the 'attributes of God' as the point of departure for Calvin's dialectic and of the intellectualizing of 'faith' as the height of his offending.

⁶ *Études d'histoire religieuse*, ed. 7 (1880), p. 342: *l'homme le plus chrétien de son siècle*. It must be borne in mind that this is not very high praise on M. Renan's lips; and was indeed intended by him to be depreciatory. We need not put an excessive estimate on Calvin's greatness, he says in effect; he lived in an age of reaction towards Christianity and he was the most Christian man of his age: his prééminence is thus accounted for.

In Calvin's treatment of faith there is nothing more striking than his determination to make it clear that it is a matter not of the understanding but of the heart; and he reproaches the Romish conception of faith precisely because it magnifies the intellectual side to the neglect of the fiducial. "We must not suppose", it is said in the Confession of Faith drawn up for the Genevan Church,⁷ either by himself or by his colleagues under his eye, "that Christian faith is a naked and mere knowledge of God or understanding of the Scriptures, which floats in the brain without touching the heart . . . It is a firm and solid confidence of the heart." Or, as he repeats this elsewhere,⁸ "It is an error to suppose that faith is a naked and cold knowledge."⁹ . . . Faith is not a naked knowledge,¹⁰ which floats in the brain, but draws with it a living affection of the heart."¹¹ "True Christian faith", he expounds in the second edition of the *Institutes*,¹² . . . "is not content with a simple historical knowledge, but takes its seat in the heart of man." "It does not suffice that the understanding should be illuminated by the Spirit of God if the heart be not strengthened by His power. In this matter the theologians of the Sorbonne very grossly err, —thinking that faith is a simple consent to the Word of God, which consists in understanding, and leaving out the confidence and assurance of the heart." "What the understanding has received must be planted in the heart. For if the Word of God floats in the head only, it has not yet been received by faith; it has its true reception only when it has taken root in the depths of the heart." Again, to cite a couple of passages in which the less pungent statement

⁷ *Instruction et Confession de Foy dont on use en l'Eglise du Genève* (Opp. xxii, 47). The Strassburg editors assign it to Calvin's colleagues; Doumergue (*Jean Calvin*, II. 236-251) to Calvin.

⁸ *Vera Christianae pacificationis et ecclesiae reformandae ratio*, 1549 (Opp. viii, 598-9).

⁹ *nudam frigidamque notitiam.*

¹⁰ *nudam notitiam.*

¹¹ *vivum affectum qui cordi insideat.*

¹² Ed. of 1539: the quotations are made from the French version of 1541, pp. 189, 202, 204.

of the earlier editions has been given new point and force in the final edition of the *Institutes*: "It must here be again observed," says he,¹³ "that we are invited to the knowledge of God—not a knowledge which, content with empty speculation, floats only in the brain, but one which shall be solid and fruitful, if rightly received by us, and rooted in the heart." "The assent we give to God", he says again,¹⁴ "as I have already indicated and shall show more largely later,—is rather of the heart than of the brain, and rather of the affections than of the understanding."¹⁵ It is quite clear, then, that Calvin did not consciously address himself merely to the securing of an intellectual assent to his teaching, but sought to move men's hearts. His whole conception of religion turned, indeed, on this: religion, he explained, to be pleasing to God, must be a matter of the heart,¹⁶ and God requires in his worshippers precisely heart and affection."¹⁷ All the arguments in the world, he insists, if unaccompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, will fail to produce the faith which piety requires.¹⁸

This scarcely sounds like a man to whom religion was simply a matter of logical proof.

And so far is he from making the attributes of God, metaphysically determined, the starting-point of a body of teaching deduced from them by quasi-mathematical reasoning,—as one would deduce the properties of a triangle from its nature as a triangle,—that it has been made his reproach that he has so little to say of the divine nature and attributes, and in this little confines himself so strictly to the manifest indicia of God in His works and the direct teaching of Scripture, refusing utterly to follow "the high priori" road either in determining the divine attributes or from

¹³ I. v. 9.

¹⁴ III. ii. 8.

¹⁵ *Cordis esse magis quam cerebri, et affectus magis quam intelligentiae.*

¹⁶ *fidem et veritatem cordis.*

¹⁷ *cor et animum* (*Opp.* vi, 477, 479).

¹⁸ I. vii. 4.

them determining the divine activities. Thus, his doctrine of God is, it is said, no doubt notably sober and restrained, but also, when compared with Zwingli's, for example,—equally notably unimportant.¹⁹ It is confessed, however, that it is at least thoroughly religious: and in this is found, indeed, its fundamental characteristic. Precisely where Calvin's doctrine differs from Zwingli's markedly is that he constantly contemplated God religiously, while Zwingli contemplated him philosophically—that to him God was above and before all things the object of religious reverence, while to Zwingli he was predominatingly the First Cause, from whom all things proceed.²⁰ “It is not with the

¹⁹ Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, 1883, p. III: “A theologian like Calvin, Zwingli was not; but still in the history of the doctrine of God the pages devoted to Zwingli are more important than those devoted to Calvin. The *loci* de Trinitate, de Creatione, and de Lapso apart, Zwingli's system is undeniably more coherent than that of Calvin, in which we miss the bond by which the several parts are joined. On the other side, however, we miss in Zwingli's doctrine of God precisely what constitutes the value of a doctrine of God for the *theologian*, that is to say, its religious character. We do not find in Zwingli as in Calvin a recoil from the consequences of his own reasoning, which leads necessarily to the ascription to God of the origination of evil, or sin, just because God is *not* with him as with Calvin conceived above everything as the object of religious reverence, but rather as the object of speculative thought.”

²⁰ Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, 1883, p. 6: “If the doctrine of God for the theologian is determined by its religious character, the contemplation of God as the object of religious reverence will take a higher place with him than the merely philosophical contemplation of God as the ultimate cause. Since it is not to be denied—as the following exposition will show,—that with Zwingli God is speculatively contemplated much more as the ultimate cause than as the object of religious reverence, we may conclude that—so far as religious value is concerned—Zwingli's doctrine of God must be ranked below Calvin's.” Again (p. 20): “In the nature of the case Calvin's conceptions of the nature of God must be very sober. For to him, God was very predominantly the object of religious reverence, and he could not therefore do otherwise than disapprove of the attempt to penetrate into the nature of the Godhead (I. v. 9). With Zwingli, on the contrary, in whose system God is preëminently conceived as the ultimate cause, the doctrine of the nature of God must form one of the most important sections of the doctrine of God.” Once more (p. 23): “Calvin, whose pride it was to be a ‘biblical theologian’, does not follow the method

doctrine of God", says the historian whose representations we have been summarizing, "but with the worship of God that Calvin's first concern was engaged. Even in his doctrine of God—as we may perceive from his remarks upon it—religion stands ever in the foreground (I. ii. 1). Before everything else Calvin is a religious personality. The Reformation confronts Catholicism with a zeal to live for God. With striking justice Calvin remarked that 'all alike engaged in the worship of God, but few really revered Him,—that there was everywhere great ostentation in ceremonies but sincerity of heart was rare' (I. ii. 2). *Reverence* for God was the great thing for Calvin. If we lose sight of this a personality like Calvin cannot be understood; and it is only by recognizing the religious principle by which he was governed, that a just judgment can be formed of his work as a dogmatician. . . ."²¹ Again, Calvin "considers the knowledge of the nature and of the attributes of God more a matter of the heart than of the understanding; and such a knowledge, he says, must not only arouse us to 'the service of God, but must also awake in us the hope of a future life' (I. v. 10). In his extreme practicality—as the last remark shows us,—Calvin rejected the philosophical treatment of the question. The Scriptures, for him the source of the knowledge of God, he takes as his guide in his remarks on the attributes. . . ."²² Still again, "Already more than once have we had occasion to note that when

of the philosophers,—the aprioristic method. He is therefore sober in his conceptions of the nature of God, since he had noted that in the Scriptures God speaks little of His nature, that He may teach us sobriety"—quoting I. xiii. 1: *ut nos in sobrietate continuat, parce de sua essentia (Deus) disserit.*

²¹ Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Calvijn*, 1881, p. 117.

²² Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, 1883, p. 47. The author of the anonymous Introduction to the edition of the *Institutes* in French, published by Meyrueis et Cie, Paris, 1859 (p. xii), says similarly: "Of a mind positive, grave, practical, removed from all need of speculation, very circumspect, not expressing its thought until its conviction had attained maturity, taking the fact of a divine revelation seriously, Calvin learned his faith at the feet of the Holy Scriptures" . . .

Calvin treats of God, he does this as a *believer*, for whom the existence of God stands as a fixed fact; and what he says of God, he draws from the Scriptures as his fundamental source, finding his pride in remaining a *biblical* theologian, and whenever he can taking the field against the *philosophico more interpretari* of the Scriptural texts (see *e. g.* I. xvi. 3). His doctrine of God has the *practical* end of serving the needs of his fellow believers. It is also noteworthy that he closes every stage of the consideration with an exhortation to the adoration of God or to the surrender of the heart to Him. Of the doctrine of the Trinity he declares that he will hold himself ever truly to the Scriptures, because he desires to do nothing more than to make what the Scriptures teach accessible to our conceptions *planioribus verbis*, and this will apply equally to the whole of his doctrine of God."²³ In a word, nothing can be clearer than that in his specific doctrine of God as well as in his general attitude to religious truth Calvin is as far as possible from being satisfied with a merely logical effect. When we listen to him on these high themes we are listening less to the play of his dialectic than to the throbbing of his heart.

It was due to this his controlling religious purpose, and to his dominating religious interest, that Calvin was able to leave the great topics of the existence, the nature and the attributes of God, without formal and detailed discussion in his *Institutes*. It is only a matter, we must reiterate, of the omission of formal and detailed discussion; for it involves not merely a gross exaggeration but a grave misapprehension to represent him as leaving these topics wholly to one side, and much more to seek to account for this assumed fact from some equally assumed peculiarity of Calvin's theological point of view or method. Under the impulse of his governing religious interest, he was able to content himself with such an exposition of the nature and attributes of God, in matter and form, as served his ends of religious

²³ P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Calvin*, etc., 1881, pp. 103-4.

impression, and was under no compulsion to expand this into such details and order it into such a methodical mode of presentation as would satisfy the demands of scholastic treatment. But to omit what would be for his purpose adequate treatment of these fundamental elements of a complete doctrine of God would have been impossible, we do not say merely to a thinker of his systematic genius, but to a religious teacher of his earnestness of spirit. In point of fact, we do not find lacking to the *Institutes* such a fundamental treatment of these great topics as would be appropriate in such a treatise. We only find their formal and separate treatment lacking. All that it is needful for the Christian man to know on these great themes is here present. Only, it is present so to speak in solution, rather than in precipitate: distributed through the general discussion of the knowledge of God rather than gathered together into one place and apportioned to formal rubrics. It is communicated moreover in a literary and concrete rather than in an abstract and scholastic manner.

It will repay us to gather out from their matrix in the flowing discourse the elements of Calvin's doctrine of God, that we may form some fair estimate of the precise nature and amount of actual instruction he gives regarding it. We shall attempt this by considering in turn Calvin's doctrine of the existence, knowableness, nature and attributes of God.

We do not read far into the *Institutes* before we find Calvin presenting proofs of the existence of God. It is quite true that this book, being written by a Christian for Christians, rather assumes the divine existence than undertakes to prove it, and concerns itself with the so-called proofs of the divine existence as means through which we rather obtain knowledge of what God is, than merely attain to knowledge that God is. But this only renders it the more significant of Calvin's attitude towards these so-called proofs that he repeatedly lapses in his discussion from their use for the former into their use for the latter and

logically prior purpose. That he thus actually presents these proofs as evidences specifically of the existence of God can admit of no doubt.²⁴

If, for example, he adduces that *sensus deitatis* with which all men, he asserts, are natively endowed, primarily as the germ which may be developed into a profound knowledge of God, he yet does not fail explicitly to appeal to it also as the source of an ineradicable conviction, embedded in the very structure of human nature and therefore present in all men alike, of the existence of God. He tells us expressly that because of this *sensus divinitatis*, present in the human mind by natural instinct, all men without excep-

²⁴ P. J. Muller's view is different, as may be seen from the following extracts: "Neither by Zwingli nor by Calvin are there offered proofs of the existence of God, although there are particular passages in their writings which seem to recall them. The proposition 'That God exists' needed neither for themselves nor for their fellow-believers, nor even against Rome, any proof. It has been thought indeed that the so-called cosmological argument is found in Zwingli, the physico-theological argument in Calvin (Lipsius, *Lehrb. der ev. prot. Dogmatik*, ed. 2, 1879, p. 213). But it would not be difficult to show that in the case of neither have we to do with a philosophical deduction, but only with an aid for attaining a complete knowledge of God" (*De Godsleer van Z. en C.*, p. 11, cf. p. 14). In a note Prof. Muller adverts to the possible use by Calvin, I. iii. 1, of "the so-called historical argument". "If Zwingli gives us no proof of God's existence, the same is true of Calvin. It is true that the physico-theological argument has been discovered in the *Institutes*. Yet as he wrote over the fifth chapter of the first book: 'That the knowledge of God is manifested in the making and continuous government of the world',—it is already evident from this that he did not intend to argue from the teleology of the world to the existence of God as its Creator, Sustainer and Governor, but that he wished merely to point to the world as to 'a beautiful book',—to speak in the words of our (Netherlandish) Confession (Art. II),—'in which all creatures, small and great, serve as letters to declare to us the invisible things of God'. Here, too, we have accordingly to do simply with a means for a rise to a fuller knowledge of God" (*Do.* p. 16). "The Scholastics may indeed—although answering the inquiry affirmatively—begin with the question, Is there a God? Such a question cannot rise with Calvin. The Reformer, assured of his personal salvation, the ground of which lay in God Himself, could also for his co-believers leave this question to one side. Practical value attached only to the inquiry how men can come to know God, of whose existence Calvin entertained no doubt" (*De Godsleer van Calvin*, p. 11).

tion (*ad unum omnes*) know (*intelligent*, perceive, understand) "that God exists" (*Deum esse*), and are therefore without excuse if they do not worship Him and willingly consecrate their lives to Him (I. iii. 1). It is to buttress this assertion that he cites with approval Cicero's declaration²⁵ that "there is no nation so barbarous, no tribe so savage, that there is not stamped on it the conviction that there is a God".²⁶ Thus he adduces the argument of the *consensus gentium*—the so-called "historical" argument,—with exact appreciation of its true bearing, not directly as a proof of the existence of God, but directly as a proof that the conviction of the divine existence is a native endowment of human nature, and only through that indirectly as a proof of the existence of God. This position is developed in the succeeding paragraph into a distinct anti-atheistic argument. The existence of religion, he says, presupposes, and cannot be accounted for except by, the presence in man of this "constant persuasion of God" from which as a seed the propensity to religion proceeds: men may deny "that God exists",²⁷ "but will they, nill they, what they wish not to know they continually are aware of".²⁸ It is a persuasion ingenerated naturally into all, that "some God exists"²⁹ (I. iii. 3), and therefore this does not need to be inculcated in the schools, but every man is from the womb his own master in this learning, and cannot by any means forget it. It is therefore mere detestable madness to deny that "God exists" (I. iv. 2).³⁰ In all these passages Calvin is dealing explicitly, not with the knowledge of what God is, but with the knowledge that God is. It is quite incontrovertible, therefore, that he grounds an argument—or rather the argument—for the existence of God in the very constitution of

²⁵ *ut ethnicus ille ait*: the allusion is to Cicero, *de natura deorum*, I. 16.

²⁶ *deum esse*.

²⁷ *qui Deum esse negent*.

²⁸ *velint tamen nolint, quod nescire cupiunt, subinde sentiscunt*.

²⁹ *imo et naturaliter ingentam esse omnibus hanc persuasionem, esse aliquem Deum*.

³⁰ *negantes Deum esse*.

man. The existence of God is, in other words, with him an "intuition", and he makes this quite as plain as if he had devoted a separate section to its exposition.

Similarly, although he writes at the head of the chapter in which he expounds the revelation which God makes of Himself in His works and deeds: "That the knowledge of God is manifested in the making of the world and its continuous government" (ch. v), he is not able to carry through his exposition without occasional lapses into an appeal to the paterfaction of God in His works as a proof of His existence, rather than as a revelation of His nature. The most notable of these lapses occurs in the course of his development of the manifestation of God made by the nature of man himself (I. v. 4), where once more he gives us an express anti-atheistic argument. "Yea", he cries, "the earth is supporting to-day many monstrous beings, who without hesitation employ the very seed of divinity which has been sown in human nature for eclipsing of the name of God. How detestable, I protest, is this insanity, that a man, discovering God a hundred times in his body and soul, should on this very pretext of excellence deny that God exists!³¹ They will not say that it is by chance that they are different from brute beasts; they only draw over God the veil of 'nature', which they declare the maker of all things, and thus abolish (*subducunt*) Him. They perceive the most exquisite workmanship in all their members, from their countenances and eyes to their very finger-nails. Here, too, they substitute 'nature' in the place of God. But above all how agile are the movements of the soul, how noble its faculties, how rare its gifts, discovering a divinity which does not easily permit itself to be concealed: unless the Epicureans, from this eminence, should like the Cyclops audaciously make war against God. Is it true that all the treasures of heavenly wisdom concur for the government of a worm five feet long, and the universe lacks this prerogative? To establish the existence of a kind of machinery in

³¹ *Deum esse neget.*

the soul, correspondent to each several part of the body, makes so little to the obscuring of the glory of God that it rather illustrates it. Let Epicurus tell what concourse of atoms in the preparation of food and drink distributes part to the excrements, part to the blood, and brings it about that the several members perform their offices with as much diligence as if so many souls by common consent were governing one body." "The manifold agility of the soul", he eloquently adds, "by which it surveys the heavens and the earth, joins the past to the future, retains in memory what it once has heard, figures to itself whatever it chooses; its ingenuity, too, by which it excogitates incredible things and which is the mother of so many wonderful arts; are certain insignia in man of divinity. . . . Now what reason exists that man should be of divine origin and not acknowledge the creator? Shall we, forsooth, discriminate between right and wrong by a judgment which has been given to us, and yet there be no judge in heaven? . . . Shall we be thought the inventors of so many useful arts, that we may defraud God of his praise . . . although experience sufficiently teaches us that all that we have is distributed to us severally from elsewhere? . . . " Calvin, of course, knows that he is digressing in a passage like this,—that "his present business is not with that sty of swine", as he calls the Epicureans. But digression or not, the passage is distinctly an employment of the so-called physico-theological proof for the existence of God, and advises us that Calvin held that argument sound and would certainly employ it whenever it became his business to develop the arguments for the existence of God.

The proofs for the existence of God on which we perceive Calvin thus to rely had been traditional in the Church from its first age. It was precisely upon these two lines of argument that the earliest fathers rested. "He who knows himself", says Clement of Alexandria, quite in Calvin's manner, "will know God."³² "The knowledge of God", exclaims

³² *Paed.* III. I. *Cf. Strom.* V. 13; *Cohort.* vi.

Tertullian, "is the dowry of the soul."³³ "If you say, 'Show me thy God'," Theophilus retorts to the heathen challenge, "I reply, 'Show me your man and I will show you my God'."³⁴ The God who cannot be seen by human eyes, declares Theophilus,³⁵ "is beheld and perceived through His providence and works": we can no more surely infer a pilot for the ship we see making straight for the harbor, than we can infer a divine governor for the universe tending straight on its course. "Those who deny that this furniture of the whole world was perfected by the divine reason", argues the Octavius of Minucius Felix,³⁶ "and assert that it was heaped together by certain fragments casually adhering to each other, seem to me to have neither mind, nor sense, nor, in fact, even sight itself." "Whence comes it", asks Dionysius of Alexandria, criticizing the atomic theory quite in Calvin's manner,³⁷ that the starry hosts—"this multitude of fellow-travellers, all unmarshalled by any captain, all ungifted with any determination of will, and all unendowed with any knowledge of each other, have nevertheless held their course in perfect harmony?" Like these early fathers, Calvin adduces only these two lines of evidence: the existence of God is already given in our knowledge of self, and it is solidly attested by His works and deeds. Whether, had we from him a professed instead of a merely incidental treatment of the topic, the metaphysical arguments would have remained lacking in his case as in theirs,³⁸ we can only

³³ *Adv. Marc.* I. 10: *Cf. De Test. Animae*, VI.

³⁴ *Ad Autol.* I. 2.

³⁵ *Do.* I. 5.

³⁶ *C.* xvii.

³⁷ *Adv. Epic.* iii.

³⁸ H. C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, 1886, p. 56: "Metaphysical proofs of the existence of God, such as those adduced by Augustine, Anselm, and Descartes, were quite foreign to the theology of the first three centuries." But in the next age they had already come in; *cf.* Sheldon, p. 187: "We find a new class of arguments, something more in the line of the metaphysical than anything which the previous centuries brought forward. Three writers in particular aspired to this order of proofs; viz., Diodorus of Tarsus, Augustine, and Boëthius." Augustine is the real father of the ontological argument: but Augus-

conjecture; but it seems very possible that as foreign to his *a posteriori* method (cf. I. v. 9) they lay outside of his scheme of proofs. Meanwhile, he has in point of fact adverted, in the course of this discussion, only to the two arguments on which the Church teachers at large had depended from the beginning of Christianity. He states these with his accustomed clearness and force, and he illuminates them with his genius for exposition and illustration; but he gives them only incidental treatment after all. In richness as well as in fullness of presentation he is surpassed here by Zwingli,³⁹ and it is to Melanchthon that we shall have to go to find among the Reformers a formal enumeration of the proofs for the divine existence.⁴⁰

tine only chronologically belonged to the old world; as Siebeck (ZPhP, 1868, p. 190) puts it, he was "the first modern man".

³⁹Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, 1883, pp. 11-16, where a very interesting account is given of Zwingli's handling of the theistic proofs—though Prof. Muller thinks that Zwingli employs them not to establish the existence of God but to increase our knowledge of God. With Zwingli all knowledge of God rests at bottom on Revelation, which is his way of saying what Calvin means by his universal *sensus deitatis*. Zwingli says, on his part, that "a certain seed of knowledge [of God] is sown [by God] also among the Gentiles" (III. 158). But he argues with great force and in very striking language, that all creation proclaims its maker. Cf. A. Baur, *Zwingli's Theologie*, I. 382: "In the doctrine of God, Zwingli distinguishes two questions: first that of the nature, and secondly that of the existence of God. The answer to the first question surpasses the powers of the human mind; that of the second, does not". That the knowledge of the existence of God, which "may be justified before the understanding" (Muller, p. 13), does not involve a knowledge of His nature, Zwingli holds is proved by the wide fact of polytheism on the one hand and the accompanying fact, on the other, that natural theism is always purely theoretical (Baur, p. 382).

⁴⁰In the earliest *Loci Communes* (1521) there was no *locus de Deo* at all. In the second form (1535-1541) there was a *locus de Deo*, but it was not to it but to the *locus de Creatione* that Melanchthon appended some arguments for the existence of God, remarking (C. R. xxi, p. 369): "After the mind has been confirmed in the true and right opinion of God and of Creation by the Word of God itself, it is then both useful and pleasant to seek out also the vestiges of God in nature and to collect the arguments (*rationes*) which testify that there is a God." These remarks are expanded in the final form (1543+) and reduced to a formal order, for the benefit of "good morals". The list

That this God, the conviction of whose existence is part of the very constitution of the human mind and is justified by abundant manifestations of Himself in His works and deeds, is knowable by man, lies on the face of Calvin's entire discussion. The whole argument of the opening chapters of the *Institutes* is directed precisely to the establishment of this knowledge of God on an irrefragable basis: and the emphasis with which the reality and trustworthiness of our knowledge of God is asserted is equalled only by the skill with which the development of our native instinct to know God into an actual knowledge of Him is traced (in ch. 1), and the richness with which His revelation of Himself in His works and deeds is illustrated by well-chosen and strikingly elaborated instances (in ch. 5). Of course, Calvin does not teach that sinful man can of himself attain to the knowledge of God. The noëtic effects of sin he takes very seriously, and he teaches without ambiguity that all men have grossly degenerated from the true knowledge of God (ch. iv). But this is not a doctrine of the unknowableness of

consists of nine "demonstrations, the consideration of which is useful for discipline and for confirming honest opinions in minds". "The first is drawn from the order of nature itself, that is from the effects arguing a maker. . . . The second, from the nature of the human mind. A brute thing is not the cause of an intelligent nature. . . . The third, from the distinction between good and evil . . . and the sense of order and number. . . . Fourthly: natural ideas are true: that there is a God, all confess naturally: therefore this idea is true. . . . The fifth is taken, in Xenophanes, from the terrors of conscience. . . . The sixth from political society. . . . The seventh is . . . drawn from the series of efficient causes. There cannot be an infinite recession of efficient causes. . . . The eighth from final causes. . . . The ninth from prediction of future events." "These arguments", he adds, "not only testify that there is a God, but are also indicia of providence. . . . They are perspicuous and always affect good minds. Many others also could certainly be collected; but because they are more obscure, I leave off." . . . G. H. Lamers, *Geschiedenis der Leer aangande God*, 1897, p. 179 [687], remarks: "It should be noted that Melancthon always when speaking of God, whether as *Spirit* or as *Love*, wishes everywhere to ascribe the highest value to God's ethical characteristics. Even the particulars, nine in number, to which he (Doedes, *Inleiding tot der Leer van God*, p. 191) points as proofs that God's existence must be recognized, show that ethical considerations

God, but rather of the incapacitating effects of sin. Accordingly he teaches that the inadequateness of the knowledge of God to which alone sinners can attain is itself a sin. Men's natures prepare them to serve God, God's revelations of Himself display Him before men's eyes: if men do not know God they are without excuse and cannot plead their inculpatory sinfulness as exculpation. God remains, then, knowable to normal man: it is natural to man to know Him. And if in point of fact He cannot be known save by a supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the heart, this is because man is not in his normal state and it requires this supernatural action of the Spirit on his heart to restore him to his proper natural powers as man. The "testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart" does not communicate to man any new powers, powers alien to him as man: it is restorative in its nature and in principle merely recovers his powers from their deadness induced by sin. The knowledge of God to which man attains through the testimony of the Spirit is therefore the knowledge which belongs to him as normal man: al-

especially attract him." More justly Herrlinger, *Die Theologie Melanchthons*, 1879, comments on Melanchthon's use of the "proofs" as follows: "The natural knowledge of God, resting on an innate idea and awakened especially by teleological contemplation of the world, Melanchthon makes in his philosophical writings, particularly in his physics, the object of consideration, so that we may speak of the elements of a natural theology in him" (p. 168). Melanchthon heaps up these arguments, enumerating nine of them, in the conviction that they will mutually strengthen one another. Herrlinger thinks that, as they occur in much the same order in more of Melanchthon's writings than one, they may be arranged on some principle,—possibly beginning with particulars in nature and man, proceeding to human association, and rising to the entirety of nature (p. 393). He continues (p. 393): "Clearly enough it is the teleological argument which in all these proofs is the real nerve of the proof. Melanchthon accords with Kant as in the high place he gives this proof, so also in perceiving that all these proofs find their strength in the ontological argument, in the innate idea of God, which is the most direct witness for God's existence. 15. 564; 'The mind reasons of God from a multitude of vestiges. But this reasoning would not be made if there were not infused (*insita*) into the mind a certain knowledge (*notitia*) or *πρόληψις* of God'. Similarly, *De Anima*, 13. 144. 169." The relation of the proofs to the innate *sensus deitatis* here indicated, holds good also for Calvin.

though now secured by him only in a supernatural manner, it is in kind, and, so far as it is the product of his innate *sensus deitatis* and the revelation of God in His works and deeds, it is in mode also, natural knowledge of God. Calvin's doctrine of the noëtic effects of sin and their removal by the "testimony of the Spirit", that is to say, by what we call "regeneration", must not then be taken as a doctrine of the unknowableness of God. On the contrary it is a doctrine of the knowableness of God, and supplies only an account of why men in their present condition fail to know Him, and an exposition of how and in what conditions the knowableness of God may manifest itself in man as now constituted in an actually known God. When the Spirit of God enters the heart with recreative power, he says, then even sinful man, his blurred eyes opened, may see God, not merely that there is a God, but what kind of Being this God is (I. i. 1; ii. 1; v. 1).

Of course, Calvin does not mean that God can be known to perfection, whether by renewed man, or by sinless man with all his native powers uninjured by sin. In the depths of His being God is to him past finding out; the human intelligence has no plumbet to sound those profound deeps. "His essence" (*essentia*), he says, "is incomprehensible (*incomprehensibilis*); so that His divinity (*numen*) wholly escapes all human senses" (I. v. 1, *cf.* I. xi. 3); and though His works and the signs by which He manifests Himself may "admonish men of His incomprehensible essence" (I. xi. 3), yet, being men, we are not *capax Dei*; as Augustine says somewhere, we stand disheartened before His greatness and are unable to take Him in (I. v. 9).⁴¹ We can know then only God's glory (I. v. 1), that is to say, His manifested perfections (I. v. 9), by which what He is to us is revealed to us (I. x. 2). What He is in Himself, we cannot know, and all attempts to penetrate into His essence are but cold and frigid speculations which can lead to no useful knowl-

⁴¹ *In Psalmos*, 144: illum non possumus capere, velut sub ejus magnitudine deficientes.

edge. "They are merely toying with frigid speculations", he says (I. ii. 2), "whose mind is set on the question of what God is (*quid sit Deus*), when what it really concerns us to know is rather what kind of a person He is (*qualis sit*) and what is appropriate to His nature (*natura*)" (I. ii. 2).⁴² We are to seek God, therefore, "not with audacious inquisitiveness by attempting to search into His essence (*essentia*), which is rather to be adored than curiously investigated; but by contemplating Him in His works, in which He brings Himself near to us and makes Himself familiar and in some measure communicates Himself to us" (I. v. 9). For if we seek to know what He is in Himself (*quis sit apud se*) rather than what kind of a person He is to us (*qualis erga nos*),—which is revealed to us in His attributes (*virtutes*)—we simply lose ourselves in empty and meteoric speculation (I. x. 2).

The distinction which Calvin is here drawing between the knowledge of the *quid* and the knowledge of the *qualis* of God; the knowledge of what He is in Himself and the knowledge of what He is to us, is the ordinary scholastic one and fairly repeats what Thomas Aquinas contends for (*Summa Theol.* I, qu. 12, art. 12), when he tells us that there is no knowledge of God *per essentiam*, no knowledge of His nature, of His *quidditas per speciem propriam*; but we know only *habitudinem ipsius ad creaturas*. There is no implication of nominalism here; nothing, for example, similar to Occam's declaration that we can know neither the divine essence, nor the divine quiddity, nor anything intrinsic to God, nor anything that God is *realiter*. When Calvin says that the Divine attributes describe not what God is *apud se*, but what kind of a person He is *erga nos*,⁴³ he is

⁴² We cannot know the quiddity of God: we can only know His quality: that is to say what His essence is is beyond our comprehension, but we may know Him in His attributes.

⁴³ Cf. the passage in ed. 2 and other middle editions in which, refuting the Sabellians, he says that such attributes as strength, goodness, wisdom, mercy, are "epithets" which "show *qualis erga nos sit Deus*", while the personal names, Father, Son, Spirit, are "names" which "declare *qualis apud semetipsum vere sit*" (*Opp.* I. 491).

not intending to deny that His attributes are true determinations of the divine nature and truly reveal to us the kind of a person He is; he is only refusing to speculate on what God is apart from His attributes by which He reveals Himself to us, and insisting that it is only in these attributes that we know Him at all. He is refusing all *a priori* methods of determining the nature of God and requiring of us to form our knowledge of Him *a posteriori* from the revelation He gives us of Himself in His activities. This He insists is the only knowledge we can have of God, and this the only way we can attain to any knowledge of Him at all. Of what value is it to us, he asks (I. v. 9), to imagine a God of whose working we have had no experience? Such a knowledge only floats in the brain as an empty speculation. It is by His attributes (*virtutes*) that God is manifested; it is only through them that we can acquire a solid and fruitful knowledge of Him. The only right way and suitable method of seeking Him, accordingly, is through His works, in which He draws near to us and familiarizes Himself to us and in some degree communicates Himself to us. Here is not an assertion that we learn nothing of God through His attributes, which represent only determinations of our own. On the contrary, here is an assertion that we obtain through the attributes a solid and fruitful knowledge of God. Only it is not pretended that the attributes of God as revealed in His activities tell us all that God is, or anything that He is in Himself: they only tell us, in the nature of the case, what He is to us. Fortunately, says Calvin, this is what we need to know concerning God, and we may well eschew all speculation concerning His intrinsic nature and content ourselves with knowing what He is in His relation to His creatures. His object is, not to deny that God is what He seems,—that His attributes revealed in His dealings with His creatures represent true determination of His nature. His object is to affirm that these determinations of His nature, revealed in His dealings with His creatures, constitute the sum of our real knowledge of God: and that

apart from them speculation will lead to no solid results. He is calling us back, not from a fancied knowledge of God through His activities to the recognition that we know nothing of Him, that what we call His attributes are only effects in us: but from an *a priori* construction of an imaginary deity to an *a posteriori* knowledge of the Deity which really is and really acts. This much we know, he says, that God is what His works and acts reveal Him to be: though it must be admitted that His works and acts reveal not His metaphysical Being but His personal relations,—not what He is *apud se*, but what He is *quoad nos*.

Of the nature of God in the abstract sense, thus,—the *quiddity* of God, in scholastic phrase—Calvin has little to say.⁴⁴ But his refusal to go behind the attributes which

⁴⁴ Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Calvijn*, p. 26: "A doctrine of the nature of God as such we do not find in Calvin." To teach us modesty, Calvin says, God says little of His nature in Scripture, but to teach us what we ought to know of Him he gives us two epithets—immensity and spirituality (p. 29). Again, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, pp. 30-31: "The little that Calvin gives us on this subject (the Divine Essence) limits itself to the remark that God's essence is 'immense and spiritual' (I. xiii. 1), 'incomprehensible to us' (I. v. 1)." Again, p. 38: "If the aprioristic method [as employed by Zwingli] is thus not favorable to the development of a doctrine of the Trinity, Calvin's aposterioristic method is on the other hand the reason that his conceptions of the nature of God—apart from the Trinity—are of less significance than Zwingli's. Since our understanding, according to Calvin, is incapable of grasping *what* God is, it is folly to seek with arrogant curiosity to investigate God's nature, 'which is much rather to be adored than anxiously to be inquired into' (*On Romans* i. 19: 'They are mad who seek to discover what God is'; *Institutes* I. ii. 2: 'The essence of God is rather to be adored than inquired into'). If we nevertheless wish to solve the problem up to a certain point, let this be done only by means of the Scriptures in which God has revealed His nature to us so far as it is needful for us to know it. The warning he gives us is therefore certainly fully comprehensible,—that 'those who devote themselves to the solving of the problem of what God is should hold their speculations within bounds; since it is of much more importance for us to know *what kind of a being God is*' (I. ii. 2). How can a man who cannot understand his own nature be able to comprehend God's nature? Let us then leave to God the knowledge of Himself: and—so Calvin says—'we leave it to Him when we conceive Him as He has revealed Himself to us, and when we seek to inquire with reference to Him, nowhere else than in His Word' (I. xiii. 21) . . . "

are revealed to us in God's works and deeds, affords no justification to us for going behind them for him and attributing to him against his protest developed conceptions of the nature of the divine essence, which he vigorously repudiates. Calvin has suffered more than most men from such gratuitous attributions to him of doctrines which he emphatically disclaims. Thus, not only has it been persistently asserted that he reduced God, after the manner of the Scotists, to the bare notion of arbitrary Will, without ethical content or determination,⁴⁵ but the contradictory concep-

⁴⁵ This is fast becoming the popular representation. Cf. e. g. Wiliston Walker, *John Calvin*, 1906, p. 149: "Thus he owed to Scotus, doubtless without realizing the obligation, the thought of God as almighty will, for motives behind whose choice it is as absurd as it is impious to inquire." Again, p. 418: "Whether this Scotist doctrine of the rightfulness of all that God wills by the mere fact of His willing it, leaves God a moral character, it is perhaps useless to inquire." But Calvin does not borrow unconsciously from Scotus: he openly repudiates Scotus. And Calvin is so far from representing the will of God to be independent of His moral character, that he makes it merely the expression of His moral character, and only inscrutable to us. Cf. also C. H. Irwin, *John Calvin*, 1909, p. 179: "Holding as he did the theory of Duns Scotus, that a thing is right by the mere fact of God willing it, he never questioned whether a course was or was not in harmony with the Divine character, if he was once convinced that it was a course attributed to God in Scripture." But Calvin did not hold that a thing is made right by the mere fact that God wills it but that the fact that God wills it (which fact Scripture may witness to us) is proof enough to us that it is right. The vogue of this remarkable misrepresentation of Calvin's doctrine of God is doubtless due to its enunciation (though in a somewhat more guarded form) by Ritschl (*Jahrb. für deutsche Theologie*, 1868, xiii, pp. 104 sq.). Ritschl's fundamental contention is that the Nominalistic conception of God, crowded out of the Roman Church by Thomism, yet survived in Luther's doctrine of the enslaved will and Calvin's doctrine of twofold predestination (p. 68), which presuppose the idea of "the groundless arbitrariness of God" in His actions. Calvin was far from adopting this principle in theory or applying it consistently. He is aware of and seeks to guard against its dangers (p. 106); but his doctrine of a double predestination (in Ritschl's opinion) proceeds on its assumption: "In spite of Calvin's reluctance, we must judge that the idea of God which governs this doctrine comes to the same thing as the Nominalistic *potentia absoluta*" (p. 107). The same line of reasoning may be read also in Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, § 79, 4 (E. T. II. 397), who also is compelled to admit that this conception of God is both repudiated by

tions of a virtual Deism⁴⁶ and a developed Pantheism⁴⁷ have with equal confidence been attributed to him. To instance but a single example, Principal A. M. Fairbairn permits himself to say that "Calvin was as pure, though not as conscious and consistent a Pantheist as Spinoza".⁴⁸ Astonishing as such a declaration is in itself, it becomes more aston-

Calvin and is destructive of his "logical structure"! For a sufficient refutation of this whole notion see Max Scheibe's *Calvin's Prädestinationslehre*, pp. 113 sq. "Calvin", says Scheibe, "could therefore very properly repudiate the charge of proceeding on the Scoto-nominalistic idea of the *potentia absoluta* of God. . . . With Calvin, on the contrary, the conception of the will of God as the highest causality has the particular meaning that God is not determined in His actions by anything lying outside of Himself, . . . while it is distinctly not excluded that God acts by virtue of an inner necessity, accordant with His nature."

⁴⁶ Cf. e. g. A. V. G. Allen, *The Continuity of Christian Thought* (1884), p. 299: "The God who is thus revealed is a being outside the framework of the universe, who called the world into existence by the power of His will. Calvin positively rejected the doctrine of the divine immanence. When he spoke of that 'dog of a Lucretius' who mingles God and nature, he may have also had Zwingli in his mind. In order to separate more completely between God and man, he interposed ranks of mediators. . . . " Also, p. 302: "In some respects the system of Calvin not merely repeats but exaggerates the leading ideas of Latin Christianity. In no Latin writer is found such a determined purpose to reject the immanence of Deity and assert His transcendence and His isolation from the world. In his conception of God, as absolute, arbitrary will, he surpasses Duns Scotus. . . . The separation between God and humanity is emphasized as it has never been before, for Calvin insists, dogmatically and formally, upon that which had been, to a large extent, hitherto, an unconscious though controlling sentiment." Prof. Allen had already represented the Augustinian theology as "resting upon the transcendence of Deity as its controlling principle",—which he explains as a tacit "assumption of Deism" (pp. 5, 191).

⁴⁷ Cf. Principal D. W. Simon, *Reconciliation by Incarnation*, p. 282, where he speaks of "the Pantheism . . . with which Calvin is logically chargeable—strongly as he might resent the imputation—when he says: 'Nothing happens but what He has knowingly and willingly decreed'; 'All the changes which take place in the world are produced by the secret agency of the hand of God'; 'Not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which He has destined.' To Dr. Simon providential government of the world implies pantheism!

⁴⁸ *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, 1893, p. 164. Even H. M. Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, etc., 1906, II. 226, having spoken of Calvin as "taking over from the Scotists" his conception of God as

ishing still when we observe the ground on which it is based. This consists essentially in the discovery that the fundamental conception of Calvinism is that "God's is the only efficient will in the universe, and so He is the one ultimate causal reality",⁴⁹—upon which the certainly very true remark is made that "the universalized Divine will is an even more decisive and comprehensive Pantheism than the universalized Divine substance".⁵⁰ The logical process by which the Calvinistic conception of the sovereign will of God as the *prima causa rerum*—where the very term *prima* implies the existence and reality of "second causes"—is transmuted into the Pantheising notion that the will of God is the sole efficient cause operative in the universe; or by which the Calvinistic conception of God as the sovereign ruler of the universe whose "will is the necessity of things" is transmuted into the reduction of God, Hegelian-wise, into pure and naked will,⁵¹—although it has apparently appealed to many, is certainly very obscure. In point of fact, when the Calvinist spoke of God as the *prima causa rerum*—the phrase is cited from William Ames⁵²—he meant by it only that all that takes place takes place in accordance with the divine will, not that the divine will is the only efficient cause in the universe; and when Calvin quotes approvingly

"sovereign and inscrutable will", adds that he needed only to suppose further that "the divine will" is "necessitated as well as inscrutable" to have taught a Pantheistic system. But as he thus allows Calvin did not suppose this, and had just pointed out that Calvin explains that God is not an "absolute and arbitrary power", we probably need not look upon this language as other than rhetorical: it certainly is not true to the facts in either of its members.

⁴⁹ P. 164. Cf. p. 430. It is Amesius to whom Dr. Fairbairn appeals to justify this statement: but he misinterprets Amesius.

⁵⁰ P. 168.

⁵¹ Cf. Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von d. Dreieinigkeit*, III (1843), pp. 35 sq.

⁵² *Medulla*, I. vii. 38: "Hence the will of God is the first cause of things. 'By thy will they are and were created' (Apoc. iv. 11). But the will of God, as He wills to operate *ad extra*, does not presuppose the goodness of the object, but by willing posits and makes it good."

from Augustine—for the words are Augustine's⁵³—that “the will of God is the necessity of things”, so little is either he or Augustine making use of the words in a Pantheistic sense that he hastens to explain that what he means is only that whatever God has willed will certainly come to pass, although it comes to pass in “such a manner that the cause and matter of it are found in” the second causes (*ut causa et materia in ipsis reperiatur*).⁵⁴

Calvin beyond all question did cherish a very robust faith in the immanence of God. “Our very existence”, he says, “is subsistence in God alone” (I. i. 1). He even allows, as Dr. Fairbairn does not fail to inform us, that it may be said with a pious meaning—so only it be the expression of a pious mind—that “nature is God” (I. v. 5 end).⁵⁵ But Dr. Fairbairn neglects to mention that Calvin

⁵³ The phrase is quoted by Dr. Fairbairn (p. 164) as Calvin's, to support the assertion that he was “as pure a pantheist as Spinoza”. But it is cited by Calvin (III. xxiii. 8) from Augustine. The matter in immediate discussion is the perdition of the reprobate.

⁵⁴ III. xxiii. 8.

⁵⁵ Cf. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, p. 26: “Accordingly also Pliny was right—according to Zwingli (*De Provid. Dei Anamnema*, iv. 90)—in calling what he calls God, nature, since the learned cannot adjust themselves to the conceptions of God of the ununderstanding multitude; while by nature he meant the power which moves all things together, and that is nothing else but God.” Again, on the general question of the charge of Pantheism brought against Zwingli, pp. 27-8: “As is well known, it has been supposed that there is a pantheistic element in Zwingli's *Anamnema*. It cannot be denied that there are some expressions which sound Spinozistic; and for those who see Pantheism in every controversy of fortuitism, Zwingli must of necessity be a Pantheist. Yet if we are to discover Spinozism in Zwingli, we can with little difficulty point to traces of Spinozism also in Paul. Such a passage as the following, for example, would certainly have been subscribed by Paul: ‘If anything comes to pass by its own power or counsel, then the wisdom and power of our Deity would be superfluous there. And if that were true, then the wisdom of the Deity would not be supreme, because it would not comprehend and take in all things; and his power would not be omnipotent, because then there would exist power independent of God's power, and in that case there would be another power which would not be the power of the Deity’ (*Opp.* vi. 85). In any case, Zwingli cannot be given the blame of standing apart from the other Reformers

adds at once, that the expression is "crude and unsuitable" (*dura et impropria*), since "nature is rather the order prescribed by God"; and, moreover, noxious, because tending to "involve God confusedly with the inferior course of His works". He neglects also to mention that the statement occurs at the end of a long discussion, in which, after rebuking those who throw an obscuring veil over God, "retire Him behind nature", and so substitute nature for Him,—Calvin inveighs against the "babble about some sort of hidden inspiration which actuates the whole world", as not only "weak" but "altogether profane", and brands the speculation of a universal mind animating and actuating the world as simply jejune (I. v. 4 and 5). Even his beloved Seneca is reproved for "imagining a divinity transfused through all parts of the world" so that God is all that we see and all that we do not see as well (I. xiii. 1), while the Pantheistic scheme of Servetus is made the object of an extended refutation (II. xiv. 5-8). To ascribe an essentially Pantheistic conception of God to Calvin in the face of such frequent and energetic repudiations of it on his own part⁵⁶ is obviously to miss his meaning altogether. If he "may be said to have anticipated Spinoza in his notion of God as *causa immanens*", and "Spinoza may be said . . . to have perfected and reduced to philosophical consistency the Calvinistic conception of Deity",⁵⁷—this can mean nothing more than that Calvin was not a Deist. And in point of fact

on this point. Calvin certainly recognizes (*Inst.* I. v. 5) that—so it occurs, simply—it may be said out of a pious mind that nature is God' (*cf. Zwingli*, VI. a. 619: 'Call God Himself Nature, with the philosophers, the principle from which all things take their origin, from which the soul begins to be'); although he adds the warning that in matters of such importance 'no expressions should be employed likely to cause offence'. Danaeus (*Lib.* I. 77 of his *Ethices Christ. lib. tres*), marvels that those who would fain bear the name of Christians, should conceive of God and nature as two different hypostases, since even the heathen philosophers (and like Zwingli, he names Seneca) more truly taught that 'the nature by which we have been brought forth is nothing else than God'. . . .

⁵⁶ *Cf.* instances in addition at I. xiv. 1, I. xv. 5.

⁵⁷ Fairbairn, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-6.

he repudiated Deism with a vehemence equal to that which he displays against Pantheism. To rob God of the active exercise of His judgment and providence, shutting Him up as an idler (*otiosum*) in heaven, he characterizes as nothing less than "detestable frenzy", since, says he, "nothing could less comport with God than to commit to fortune the abandoned government of the world, shut His eyes to the iniquities of men and let them wanton with impunity" (I. iv. 2).⁵⁸

Calvin's conception of God is that of a pure and clear Theism, in which stress is laid at once on His transcendence and His immanence, and emphasis is thrown on His righteous government of the world. "Let us bear in mind, then", he says as he passes from his repudiation of Pantheism, "that there is one God, who governs all natures" (I. v. 6, *init.*), "and wishes us to look to Him,—to put our trust in Him, to worship and call upon Him" (I. v. 6); to whom we can look up as to a Father from whom we expect and receive tokens of love (I. v. 3). So little is he inclined to reduce this divine Father to bare will, that he takes repeated occasion expressly to denounce this Scotist conception. The will of God, he says, is to us indeed the unique rule of righteousness and the supremely just cause of all things; but we are not like the sophists to prate about some sort of "absolute will" of God, "profanely separating His righteousness from His power", but rather to adore the governing providence which presides over all things and from which nothing can proceed which is not right, though the reasons for it may be hidden from us (I. xvii, 2, end). "Nevertheless", he remarks in another place, after having exhorted his readers to find in the will of God a sufficient account of things,—“nevertheless, we do not betake our-

⁵⁸ Cf. I. xvi. 1: "To make God a momentaneous creator, who entirely finished all His work at once, were frigid and jejune", etc. Also the Genevan Catechism of 1545 (*Opp.* vi. 15-18): The particularization of God's creatorship in the creed is not to be taken as indicating that God so created His works at once that afterwards He rejects the care of them. It is rather so to be held that the world as it was made by Him at once, so now is conserved by Him; and He is to remain their supreme governor, etc.

selves to the fiction of absolute power, which, as it is profane, so ought to be deservedly detestable to us: we do not imagine that the God who is a law to Himself is exlex, . . . the will of God is not only pure from all fault, but is the supreme rule of perfection, even the law of all laws" (III. xxiii, 2, end).⁵⁹ In a word, the will of God is to Calvin the supreme rule for us, because it is the perfect expression of the divine perfections.⁶⁰

Calvin thus refuses to be classified as either Deist, Pantheist or Scotist; and those who would fain make him one or the other of these have nothing to go upon except that on the one hand he does proclaim the transcendence of God and speaks with contempt of men who imagine that divinity is transfused into every part of the world, and that there is a portion of God not only in us but even in wood and stone (I. xiii. 1, 22); and on the other he does proclaim the immanence of God and invites us to look upon His works or to descend within ourselves to find Him who "everywhere diffuses, sustains, animates and quickens all things in heaven and in earth", who, "circumscribed by no

⁵⁹ It is not uncommon for historians of doctrine who are inclined to represent Calvin as enunciating the Scotist principle, therefore, to suggest that he is scarcely consistent with himself. Thus, *e. g.*, H. C. Sheldon, *History of Christian Doctrine* (1886), II. 93: "Some, who were inclined to extreme views of the divine sovereignty, asserted the Scotist maxim that the will of God is the absolute rule of right. Luther's words are quite as explicit as those of Scotus. . . . 'The will of God', says Calvin . . . (VI. iii. 23). . . . Calvin, however, notwithstanding this strong statement, suggests after all that he meant not so much that God's will is absolutely the highest rule of right, as that it is one which we cannot transcend, and must regard as binding on our own judgment; for he adds, 'We represent not God as lawless, who is a law to Himself.'"

⁶⁰ Cf. Bavinck, *Geref. Dogmatiek*, II. 226, who after remarking on Calvin's rejection of the Scotist notion of *potentia absoluta*, as a "profane invention"—adducing *Instt.* III. xxiii. 1-5; I. xvi. 3, II. vii. 5, IV. xvii. 24, *Comm. in Jes.* 239, *in Luk.* 118, adds: "The Romanists on this account charge Calvin with limiting and therefore denying God's omnipotence (Bellarmine, *De Gratia et Lib. Arbitrio*, III. c. 15). But Calvin is not denying that God can do more than He actually does, but only opposing such a *potentia absoluta* as is not connected with His Being or Virtues, and can therefore do all kinds of inconsistent things."

boundaries, by transfusing His own vigor into all things, breathes into them being, life and motion" (I. xiii. 14); while still again he does proclaim the will of God to be inscrutable by such creatures as we are and to constitute to us the law of righteousness, to be accepted as such without murmurings or questionings. In point of fact, all these charges are but several modes of expressing the dislike their authors feel for Calvin's doctrine of the sovereignty of the divine will, which, following Augustine, he declares to be "the necessity of things": they would fain brand this hated conception with some name of opprobrium, and, therefore, seek to represent Calvin now as hiding God deistically behind His own law, and now as reducing Him to a mere stream of causality, or at least to mere naked will.⁶¹ By thus declining alternately to contradictories they show sufficiently clearly that in reality Calvin's doctrine of God coincides with none of these characterizations.

The peculiarity of Calvin's conception of God, we perceive, is not indefiniteness, but reverential sobriety. Clearing his skirts of all Pantheistic, Deistic, Scotist notions,—and turning aside even to repudiate Manichaeism and Anthropomorphism (I. xiii. 1) — he teaches a pure theism

⁶¹ A flagrant example may be found in the long argument of F. C. Baur, *Die christl. Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit*, III. (1843), pp. 35 ff., where he represents the Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation as postulating in God a schism between mercy and justice which can be reduced only by thinking of Him as wholly indifferent to good and evil, and indeed of good and evil as a non-existent opposition. If justice is an equally absolute attribute with God as grace, he argues, then evil and good are at one, in that reality cannot be given to the attribute in which the absolute being of God consists without evil. Evil has the same relation to the absolute being of God as good; and "God is in the same sense the principle of evil as of good"; and "as God's justice cannot be without its object, God must provide this object". "But if evil as well as the good is from God, then on that very account evil is good: thus good and evil are entirely indifferent with respect to each other, and the absolute Dualism is resolved into the same absolute arbitrariness (*Willkür*) in which Duns Scotus had placed the absolute Being of God." This, however, is not represented as Calvin's view, but as the consequence of Calvin's view—as drawn out in the Hegelianizing dialectic of Baur.

which he looks upon as native to men (I. x. 3). The nature of this one God, he conceives, can be known to us only as He manifests it in His works (I. v. 9); that is to say, only in His perfections. What we call the attributes of God thus become to Calvin the sum of our knowledge of Him. In these manifestations of His character we see not indeed what He is in Himself, but what He is to us (I. x. 2); but what we see Him to be thus to us, He truly is, and this is all we can know about Him. We might expect to find in the *Institutes*, therefore, a comprehensive formal discussion of the attributes, by means of which what God is to us should be fully set before us. This, however, as we have already seen, we do not get.⁶² And much less do we get any metaphysical discussion of the nature of the attributes of God, their relation to one another, or to the divine essence of which they are determinations. We must not therefore suppose, however, that we get little or nothing of them, or little or nothing to the point. On the contrary, besides incidental allusions to them throughout the discussion, from which we may glean much of Calvin's conceptions of them, they are made the main subject of two whole chapters, the one of which discusses in considerable detail the revelation of the divine perfections in His works and deeds, the other the revelation made of them in His Word. We have already remarked upon the skill with which Calvin, at the opening of his discussion of the doctrine of God (ch. x), manages, under color of pointing out the harmony of the description of God given in the Scriptures with the conception of Him we may draw from His works, to bring all he had to say of the divine attributes at once before the reader's eye. The Scriptures, says he, are in essence here merely a plainer (I. xi. 1) republication of the general revelation given of God in His works and deeds: they "contain nothing" in

⁶² Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, p. 40: "Neither in Zwingli nor in Calvin do we meet with a formal 'doctrine of the attributes' or with a classification of the attributes. No doubt it happens that both occasionally name a number of attributes together; and have something to say of each attribute in particular."

their descriptions of God, "but what may be known from the contemplation of the creatures" (I. x. 2, *med.*). And he illustrates this remark by quoting from Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6), the Psalms (cxlv) and the prophets (Jer. ix. 24) passages in which God is richly described, and remarking on the harmony of the perfections enumerated with those which he had in the earlier chapter (v) pointed out as illustrated in the divine works and deeds. This comparison involves a tolerably full enumeration and some discussion of the several attributes, here on the basis of Scripture, as formerly (ch. v) on the basis of nature. He does not, therefore, neglect the attributes so much as deal with them in a somewhat indirect manner. And, we may add, in a highly practical way: for here too his zeal is to avoid "airy and vain speculations" of what God is in Himself and to focus attention upon what He is to us, that our knowledge of Him may be of the nature of a lively perception and religious reaction (I. x. 2 *init. et fin.*).

In a number of passages Calvin brings together a plurality of the attributes—his name for them is "virtues"⁶³—and even hints at a certain classification of them. One of the most beautiful of these passages formed the opening words of the first draft of the *Institutes*, but fell out in the subsequent revisions—to the regret of some, who consider it, on the whole, the most comprehensive description of God Calvin has given us.⁶⁴ It runs as follows: "The sum of holy

⁶³ *Virtutes Dei*, I. ii. 1; v. 9, 9, 10; x. 2. In xiii. 4 *med.* he uses the term *attributa*. In xiii. 1, speaking of the divine spirituality and immensity, he used *epitheta*.

⁶⁴ Köstlin, as cited, p. 62: "On the other hand,—and this is the most important for us,—there is not given in the *Institutes* any comprehensive presentation of the attributes, especially of the ethical attributes of God, nor is any such attempted anywhere afterwards; the first edition, which began with some comprehensive propositions about God as infinite wisdom, righteousness, mercy, etc., rather raises an expectation of something more in the later, more thoroughly worked out editions of the work: but these propositions fell out of the first edition and were never afterward developed." In the intermediate editions (1543-1550) this paragraph has taken the form of: "Nearly the whole sum of our wisdom—and this certainly should be esteemed true and solid wisdom—consists in two facts: the knowledge of God and of

doctrine consists of just these two points,—the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. These, now, are the things which we must keep in mind concerning God. First, we should hold fixed in firm faith that He is infinite wisdom, righteousness, goodness, mercy, truth, power (*virtus*) and life, so that there exists no other wisdom, righteousness, goodness, mercy, truth, power and life (Baruch iii. 31, 35; James i. 16), and wheresoever any of these things is seen, it is from Him (Rev. xvi. 1-4, 9). Secondly, that all that is in heaven or on earth has been created for His glory (Ps. cxlviii. 1-14; Dan. iii. 28, 29); and it is justly due to Him that everything, according to its own nature, should serve Him, acknowledge His authority, seek His glory and obediently accept Him as Lord and King (Rev. i. 25). Thirdly, that He is Himself a just judge, and will therefore be severely avenged on those who depart from His commandments, and are not in all things subject to His will; who in thought, word and deed have not sought His glory (Ps. lxxix. 10, 18; Rev. ii. 6, 11). In the fourth place that He is merciful and long-suffering, and will receive into His kingdom, the miserable and despised who take refuge in His clemency and trust in His faithfulness; and is ready to spare and forgive those who ask His favor, to succor and help those who seek His aid, and desirous of saving those who put their trust in Him (Is. lv. 3, 6; Ps. xxv. 6-11, lxxxv. 3-5, 10).” In the first clause of this striking paragraph we have a formal enumeration of God’s ethical attributes, which is apparently meant to be generically com-

ourselves. The one, now, not only shows that there is one God whom all ought to worship and adore, but at the same time teaches also that this one God is the source of all truth, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, justice, mercy, power, holiness, so that we are taught that we ought to expect and seek all these things from Him, and when we receive them to refer them to Him with praise and gratitude. The other, however, by manifesting to us our weakness, misery, vanity and foulness, first brings us into serious humility, dejection, diffidence and hatred of ourselves, and then kindles a longing in us to seek God, in whom is to be found every good thing of which we discover ourselves to be so empty and lacking.”

plete,—although in the course of the paragraph other specific forms of attributes here enumerated occur; and all of them are declared to exist in God in an infinite mode. The list contains seven items: wisdom; righteousness; goodness (clemency); mercy (long-sufferingness); truth; power; life.⁶⁵ If we compare this list with the enumeration in the famous definition of God in the Westminster *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 4),⁶⁶ we shall see that it is practically the same: the only difference being that Calvin adds to the general term 'goodness' the more specific 'mercy', affixes 'life' at the end, and omits 'holiness', doubtless considering it to be covered by the general term 'righteousness'.

If just this enumeration does not recur in the *Institutes* as finally revised, something very like it evidently underlies more passages than one. Even in the first section of the first chapter, which has taken its place, we have an enumeration of the 'good things' (*bona*) in God which stand opposed to our 'evil things' (*mala*), that brings together wisdom, power, goodness and righteousness: for in God alone, we are told, can be found "the true light of *wisdom*, solid *power* (*virtus*), a perfect affluence of all *good* things, and the purity of *righteousness*" (I. i. 1). In the opening section of the next chapter we have two enumerations of the divine perfections, obviously rhetorical, and yet betraying an underlying basis of systematic arrangement: the later and fuller of these brings together power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, justice, mercy,—closing with a reference to God's powerful 'protection'. God, we are told, "sustains this world by His immense *power* (*immensa potentia*), governs it by His *wisdom*, preserves it by His *goodness*, rules over the human race especially by His *righteousness* and *justice* (*judicium*), bears with it in His *mercy*, defends it by His *protection*

⁶⁵ In the list which takes the place of this in the middle editions of the *Institutes*, the order is different (and scarcely so regular), and 'life' is omitted, while 'justice' is added to 'righteousness', and 'sanctity' appended at the end, and 'potentia' substituted for 'virtus': "truth; wisdom; goodness; righteousness; *justice*; mercy; (power); *holiness*."

⁶⁶ "Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

(*praesidium*).” The most complete enumerations of all, however, are given, when, leaving the intimations of nature, Calvin analyses some Scriptural passages with a view to drawing out their descriptions of the divine perfections. His analysis of Exod. xxxiv. 6 is particularly full (I. x. 2). He finds the divine eternity and self-existence embodied in the name Jehovah; the divine strength and power (*virtus et potentia*) expressed in the name Elohim; and in the description itself an enumeration of those virtues which describe God not indeed as He is *apud se*, but as He is *erga nos*—to wit, His clemency, goodness, mercy, righteousness, justice, truth. The strongest claim which this passage has on our interest, however, is the suggestion it bears of a classification of the attributes. The predication to God of eternity and self-existence (*αὐτοσύλα*) evidently is for Calvin something specifically different from the ascription to Him of those virtues by which are described not what He is *apud se*, but what He shows Himself to be *erga nos*. They in a word belong rather to the quiddity of God than to His qualitas. In a subsequent passage (xiii. 1) we have a plainer hint to the same effect. There we are given “two epithets” which we are told are applied by Scripture to the very “essence” of God, in its rare speech concerning His essence—immensity and spirituality.⁶⁷ It seems quite clear, then, that Calvin was accustomed to distinguish in his thought between such epithets, describing what God is *apud se*, and those virtues by which He is manifested to us in His relations *erga nos*. That is to say, he distinguishes between what are sometimes called His physical or metaphysical and His ethical attributes: that is to say, between the fundamental modes of the Divine Being and the constitutive qualities of the Divine Person.⁶⁸

If we profit by this hint and then collect the attributes

⁶⁷ Quod de immensa et spiritali Dei essentia traditur in Scripturis . . . parce de sua essentia disserit, duobus tamen illis quae dixi epithetis. . . .

⁶⁸ See the distinction very luminously drawn out by J. H. Thornwell, *Works*, I. 168-9.

of the two classes as Calvin occasionally mentions them, we shall in effect reconstruct Calvin's definition of God.⁶⁹ This would run somewhat as follows: There is but one only true God,⁷⁰ a self-existent,⁷¹ simple,⁷² invisible,⁷³ incomprehensible⁷⁴ Spirit,⁷⁵ infinite,⁷⁶ immense,⁷⁷ eternal,⁷⁸ perfect,⁷⁹ in His Being, power,⁸⁰ knowledge,⁸¹ wisdom,⁸² righteousness,⁸³ justice,⁸⁴ holiness,⁸⁵ goodness⁸⁶ and truth.⁸⁷ In ad-

⁶⁹ Perhaps as near as Calvin ever came to framing an exact definition of God *apud se*, is the description of God in the middle edd. of the *Institutes*, VI. 7 (*Opp.* xxix, 480), summed up in the opening words: "That there is one God of eternal, infinite and spiritual essence, the Scriptures currently declare with plainness." The *essence* of God then is eternal, infinite and spiritual. Cf. *Adv. P. Caroli Calumnias* (*Opp.* vii. 312): "The one God which the Scriptures preach to us we believe in and adore, and we think of Him as He is described to us by them, to wit, as of eternal, infinite and spiritual essence, who also alone has in Himself the power of existence from Himself and bestows it upon His creatures."

⁷⁰ *unicus et verus Deus*, I. ii. 2; *unicus Deus*, xii. 1; xiii. 2; *unus Deus*, ii. 1; v. 6; x. 3; xii. 1; *verus Deus*, x. 3; *unitas Dei*, xiii. 1, etc.

⁷¹ *a se principium habens*, v. 6; *αὐτοῦστα*, x. 2; *αὐτοῦστα*, id est a se ipso existentia, xiv. 3.

⁷² *simplex Dei essentia*, xiii. 2; *simplex et individua essentia Dei*, xiii. 2; *una simplexque Deitas*, *Adv. Val. Gent.*

⁷³ *invisibilis Deus*, II. vi. 4 (made visible in Christ, so also II. ix. 4); *invisibilis I. xi. 3* (of Holy Spirit).

⁷⁴ *incomprehensibilis v. 1; xi. 3* (in xiii. 1 apparently used for *immensa*).

⁷⁵ *spiritualis Dei essentia*, xiii. 1; *spiritualis natura*, xiii. 1.

⁷⁶ *in Deo residet bonorum infinitas*, i. 1 (cf. ed. I. I. *ad init* [p. 42], *infinitam*).

⁷⁷ *immensa essentia Dei*, xiii. 1; *ejus immensitas*, xiii. 1; *immensitas*, xiii. 1; *immensa Dei essentia*, xiii. 2.

⁷⁸ *aeternitas*, v. 6; x. 2; xiii. 17; xiv. 3; *aeternus [Deus]*, v. 6.

⁷⁹ *exacta justitiae, sapientiae virtutis ejus perfectio*, i. 2.

⁸⁰ *potentia*, ii. 1; v. 3, 6, 8; x. 2; *immensa potentia*, ii. 1; v. 1, 3, 6, 8; *omnipotentia*, xvi. 3; *omnipotens*, xvi. 3; *virtus*, i. 1, 3; v. 6; x. 2; *virtus et potentia*, x. 2.

⁸¹ *notitia*, III. xxi. 5; *praescientia*, III. xxi. 5.

⁸² *sapientia*, i. 1, 3; ii. 1; v. 1, 2, 3, 8, 10; *mirifica sapientia*, v. 2.

⁸³ *justitia*, ii. 1; x. 2; III. xxiii. 4; *justitiae puritas*, i. 1; *justitia judiciumque*, ii. 1.

⁸⁴ *judicium* ii. 1; x. 2; *justitia judiciumque*, ii. 1; *justus judex*, ii. 1.

⁸⁵ *sanctitas*, x. 2; *puritas*, i. 3; *divina puritas*, i. 2.

⁸⁶ *bonitas*, ii. 1; v. 3, 6, 9; x. 1, 2; xv. 1; *bonus*, iii. 2.

⁸⁷ *veritas*, x. 2; *Deus verax*, III. xx. 26.

dition to these more general designations, Calvin employs a considerable number of more specific terms, by which he more precisely expresses his thought and more fully explicates the contents of the several attributes. Thus, for example, he is fond of the term "severity"⁸⁸ when he is endeavoring to give expression to God's attitude as a just judge to the wicked; and he is fond of setting in contrast with it the corresponding term "clemency"⁸⁹ to express His attitude towards the repentant sinner. It is especially the idea of "goodness" which he thus draws out into its several particular manifestations. Beside the term "clemency" he sets the still greater word "mercy", or "pity",⁹⁰ and by the side of this again he sets the even greater word "grace",⁹¹ while the more general idea of "goodness" he develops by the aid of such synonyms as "beneficence"⁹² and "benignity",⁹³ and almost exhausts the capacity of the language to give expression to his sense of the richness of the Divine goodness.⁹⁴ God is "good and merciful" (iii. 2), "benign and beneficent" (v. 7), "the fount and source of all good" (ii. 2), their fecund "author" (ii. 2), whose "will is prone to beneficence" (x. 1), and in whom dwells a "perfect affluence", nothing less than an "infinity", of good things. And therefore he looks upwards to this God not only as our Lord (ii. 1) the Creator (ii. 1), Sustainer (ii. 1) and Governor (ii. 1) of the world—and more particularly its "moral governor" (ii. 2), its "just judge" (ii. 2),—but more especially as our "defender and protector",⁹⁵ our Father⁹⁶ who is also

⁸⁸ *severitas*, ii. 2; v. 7, 10; xvii. 1.

⁸⁹ *clementia*, v. 7, 8, 10; x. 2.

⁹⁰ *misericordia*, ii. 1; x. 2; *misericors*, iii. 2 (*bonus et misericors*).

⁹¹ *gratia*, v. 3.

⁹² *beneficus*, v. 7; *voluntas ad beneficentiam proclivis*, x. 1; *Dei favor et beneficentia*, xvii. 1.

⁹³ *benignitas*, v. 7; *benignus et beneficus*, v. 7.

⁹⁴ *bonus et misericors*, iii. 2; *benignus et beneficus*, v. 7; *bonorum omnium fons et origo*, ii. 2; *bonorum omnium autor*, ii. 2; *voluntas ad beneficentiam proclivis*, x. 1; *bonorum omnium perfecta affluentia*, i. 1; *in Deo residet bonorum infinitas*, i. 1.

⁹⁵ *tutor et protector*, ii. 2.

⁹⁶ *Dominus et Pater*, ii. 2.

our Lord, in whose "fatherly indulgence"⁹⁷ we may trust.

There is in the *Institutes* little specific exposition of the manner in which we arrive at the knowledge of these attributes. The works of God, we are told, illustrate particularly His wisdom (v. 2) and His power (v. 6). But His power, we are further told, leads us on to think of His eternity and His self-existence, "because it is necessary that He from whom everything derives its origin, should Himself be eternal and have the ground of His being in Himself":⁹⁸ while we must posit His goodness to account for His will to create and preserve the world.⁹⁹ By the works of providence God manifests primarily His benignity and beneficence; and in His dealing with the pious, His clemency, with the wicked His severity¹⁰⁰—which are but the two sides of His righteousness: although, of course, His power and wisdom are equally conspicuous.¹⁰¹ It is precisely the same body of attributes which are ascribed to God in the Scriptures,¹⁰² and that not merely in such a passage as Ex. xxxiv. 6, to which we have already alluded, but everywhere throughout their course (x. 1, *fin.*). Psalm cxl, for example, so exactly enumerates the whole list of God's perfections that scarcely one is lacking. Jeremiah ix. 24, while not so full, is to the same effect. Certainly the three perfections there mentioned are the most necessary of all for us to know,—the divine "mercy in which alone consists all our salvation; His justice, which is exercised on the wicked every day, and awaits them more grievously still in eternal destruction; His righteousness, by which the faithful are preserved and most lovingly supported." "Nor" adds Calvin, is there any real omission here of the other perfections—"either of His truth, or power, or holi-

⁹⁷ Paterna indulgentia, v. 7.

⁹⁸ v. 6: iam ipsa potentia nos ad cogitandam ejus aeternitatem deducit; quia aeternum esse, et a se ipso principium habere necesse est unde omnium trahunt originem.

⁹⁹ *Do.*

¹⁰⁰ v. 7.

¹⁰¹ v. 8.

¹⁰² x. 2.

ness, or goodness". "For how could we be assured, as is here required, of His righteousness, mercy and justice, unless we were supported by His inflexible veracity? And how could we believe that He governs the world in justice and righteousness unless we acknowledged His power? And whence proceeds His mercy but from His goodness? And if all His ways are justice, mercy, righteousness, certainly holiness also is conspicuous in them." The divine power, righteousness, justice, holiness, goodness, mercy, and truth are here brought together and concatenated one with the others, with some indication of their mutual relations, and with a clear intimation that God is not properly conceived unless He is conceived in all His perfections. Any description of Him which omits more or fewer of these perfections, it is intimated, is justly chargeable with defect. Similarly when dealing with those more fundamental "epithets" by which His essence is described (xii. 1), he makes it plain that not to embrace them all in our thought of God, and that in their integrity, is to invade His majesty: the fault of the Manichaeans was that they broke up the unity of God and restricted His immensity.¹⁰³

There is no lack in Calvin's treatment of the attributes, then, of a just sense of their variety or of the necessity of holding them all together in a single composite conception that we may do justice in our thought to God. He obviously has in mind the whole series of the divine perfections in clear and just discrimination, and he accurately conceives them as falling apart into two classes, the one qualities of the divine essence, the other characteristics of the Divine person—in a word, essential and personal attributes: and he fully realizes the relation of these two classes to one another, and as well the necessity of embracing each of the attributes in its integrity in our conception of God, if we are to do any justice whatever to that conception.

What seems to be lacking in Calvin's treatment of the

¹⁰³ I. xiii. 1: Certe hoc fuit et Dei unitatem abrumpere, et restringere immensitatem.

attributes is detailed discussion of the notion imbedded in each several attribute and elaboration of this notion as a necessary element in our conception of God. Calvin employs the terms unity, simplicity, self-existence, incomprehensibility, spirituality, infinity, immensity, eternity, immutability, perfection, power, wisdom, righteousness, justice, holiness, goodness, benignity, beneficence, clemency, mercy, grace,¹⁰⁴ as current terms bearing well-understood meanings, and does not stop to develop their significance except by incidental remarks.^{104a} The confidence which he places in their conveyance of their meaning seems to be justified by the event; although, no doubt, much of the effect of their mere enumeration is due to the remarkable lucidity of Calvin's thought and style: he uses his terms with such consistency and exactness, that they become self-defining in their context. We are far, then, from saying that his method of dealing with the attributes, by mere allusion as we might almost call it, is inadequate for the practical religious purpose for which he was writing: and certainly it is far more consonant with the literary rather than scholastic form he gives his treatise. When we suggest, then, that from the scholastic point of view it seems that it is precisely at this point that Calvin's treatment of the attributes falls

¹⁰⁴ These are fairly brought together by P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Calvin*, 1881, pp. 39-44. The third section of the *Instruction* (French, 1537) or *Catechism* (Latin, 1538) is almost a complete treatise in brief on the attributes. As in the *Institutes*, on which this Catechismus is based, the attributes derived from the study of the Divine Works are first enumerated and then those derived from the Word. As to the former Calvin says: "For we contemplate in this universe of things, the *immortality* of our God, from which has proceeded the commencement and origin of all things; His *power* (potentia) which has both made and now sustains so great a structure (moles, machine); His *wisdom*, which has composed and perpetually governs so great and confused a variety in an order so distinct; His *goodness*, which has been the cause to itself that all these things were created and now exist; His *justice*, which wonderfully manifests itself in the defense of the good and the punishment of the wicked; His *mercy*, which, that we may be called to repentance, endures our wickedness with so great a clemency."

^{104a} Observe the admirable discussion of the omnipotence of God after this incidental fashion in *Institutes*, I. xvi. 3.

somewhat short of what we might desire, we must not permit to slip out of our memory that Calvin expressly repudiates the scholastic point of view and is of set purpose simple and practical.¹⁰⁵ He does not seek to obtain for himself or to recommend to others such a knowledge of God as merely 'raises idle speculation in the brain'; but such as 'shall be firm and fruitful' and have its seat in the heart. He purposely rejects, therefore, the philosophical mode of dealing with the attributes and devotes himself to awakening in the hearts of his readers a practical knowledge of God, a knowledge which functions first in the fear (*timor*) of God and then in trust (*fiducia*) in Him.

And here we must pause to take note of this two-fold characterization of the religious emotion, corresponding, as it does in Calvin's conception, to the double aspect in which God is contemplated by those who know Him. God is our

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P. J. Muller, *De Godsleer van Calvijn*, p. 45: "No doubt we should expect a doctrine of the attributes, when we hear him say that God has revealed Himself in His *virtutes*, but we should bear in mind that Calvin (although not always free himself from philosophical influences) renounces philosophical treatment of theological questions, and is extremely practical, so that it is to him, for example, less important to seek a connection between the several attributes, than to point out what we may learn from them not so much of God, as for ourselves and our lives."—So, also, *De Godsleer van Zwingli en Calvijn*, pp. 47-8: "Calvin does not recommend such a 'knowledge of God' as merely 'raises an idle speculation in the brain', but such an one 'as should be firm and fruitful also in consequences, which can be expected only of the knowledge which has its seat in the heart' (I. v. 9). He considers the knowledge of the nature and of the attributes of God more a matter of the heart than of the understanding; and such knowledge not only must arouse us to the service of God, but must also plant in us the hope of a future life (I. v. 10). In his extreme practicality—as the last remark shows us—Calvin rejected the philosophical treatment of the question. The Scriptures, for him the fountain of the knowledge of God, he takes as his guide in his remarks on the attributes." Compare what Lobstein says in his *Études sur la Doctrine Chrétienne de Dieu*, 1907, p. 113: "The passages of Calvin's *Institutes* devoted to the idea of the divine omnipotence are inspired and dominated by the living interest of piety, which gives to their discussions a restrained emotion and a warmth to which no reader can remain insensible."

Lord, in whose presence awe and reverence become us; God is our Father, to whom we owe trust and love. Fear and love—both must be present where true piety is: for, says Calvin, what “I call piety (*pietas*) is that reverence combined with love of God, which a knowledge of His benefits produces” (I. ii. 1). In the form he has given this statement the element of reverence (*reverentia*) appears to be made the formative element: piety is reverence, although it is not reverence without love. But if it is not reverence in and of itself but only the reverence which is informed by love, love after all may be held to become the determining element of true piety. And Calvin does not hesitate to declare with the greatest emphasis that the apprehension of God as deserving of our worship and adoration—in a word as our Lord—*simpliciter*, does not suffice to produce true piety: that is not born, he says, until “we are persuaded that God is the fountain of all that is good and cease to seek for good elsewhere than in Him” (*ibid.*); that is to say, until we apprehend Him as our Father as well as our Lord. “For”, adds he, “until men feel that they owe everything to God, that they are cherished by His paternal care, that He is the author to them of all good things and nothing is to be sought out of Him, they will never subject themselves to Him in willing obedience (*observantia*, *reverent* obedience); or rather I should say, unless they establish for themselves a solid happiness in Him they will never devote themselves to Him without reserve truly and heartily (*vere et ex animo totos*).” And then he proceeds (I. ii. 2) to expound at length how the knowledge of God should first inspire us with fear and reverence and then lead us to look to Him for good. The first thought of Him awakes us to our dependence on Him as our Lord: any clear view of Him begets in us a sense of Him as the fountain and origin of all that is good,—such as in anyone not depraved by sin must inevitably arouse a desire to adhere to Him and put his trust (*fiducia*) in Him,—because he must recognize in Him a guardian and protector worthy of complete confidence

(*fidem*). "Because he perceives Him to be the author of all good, in trial or in need", he proceeds, still expounding the state of mind of the truly pious man, "he at once commits himself to His protection, expectant of His help; because he is convinced that He is good and merciful, he rests on Him in assured trust (*fiducia*), never doubting that a remedy is prepared in His clemency for all his ills; because he recognizes Him as Lord and Father, he is sure that he ought to regard His government in all things, revere His majesty, seek His glory, and obey His behests; because he perceives Him to be a just judge, armed with severity for punishing iniquities, he keeps His tribunal always in view, and in fear restrains and checks himself from provoking His wrath. And yet, he is not so terrified by the sense of His justice, that he wishes to escape from it, even if flight were possible: rather he embraces Him not less as the avenger of the wicked than as the benefactor of the pious, since he perceives it to belong to His glory not less that there should be meted out by Him punishment to the impious and iniquitous, than the reward of eternal life to the righteous. Moreover, he restrains himself from sinning not merely from fear of punishment, but because he loves and reverences God as a father (*loco patris*) and honors and worships Him as Lord (*loco domini*), and even though there were no hell he would quake to offend Him."

We have quoted this eloquent passage at length because it throws into prominence, as few others do, Calvin's deep sense not merely of reverence but of love towards God. To him true religion always involves the recognition of God not only as Lord but also as Father. And this double conception of God is present whether this religion be conceived as natural or as revealed. "The knowledge of God", says he (I. x. 2 *fin.*), "which is proposed to us in the Scriptures is directed to no other end than that which is manifested to us in the creation: to wit, it invites us first to the fear of God, then to trust in Him; so that we may learn both to serve Him in perfect innocence of life and sincere obedi-

ence, and as well to rest wholly in His goodness." That is, in a word, the sense of the divine Fatherhood is as fundamental to Calvin's conception of God as the sense of His sovereignty. Of course, he throws the strongest conceivable emphasis on God's Lordship: the sovereignty of God is the hinge of His thought of God. But this sovereignty is ever conceived by him as the sovereignty of God our Father. The distinguishing feature of Calvin's doctrine of God is, in a word, precisely the prevailing stress he casts on this aspect of the conception of God. It is a Lutheran theologian who takes the trouble to make this plain to us. "The chief elements which are dealt with by Calvin in the matter of the religious relation", he says, "are summed up in the proposition: God is our Lord, who has made us, and our Father from whom all good comes; we owe Him, therefore, honor and glory, love and trust. We must, so we are told in the exposition of the Decalogue in the first edition of the *Institutes*, just as we are told in Luther's Catechism—we must 'fear and love' God. . . . [But] we find in the *Institutes*, and, indeed, particularly in the final edition, expressions in which the second of these elements is given the preference. . . . We may find, indeed, in Luther and the Lutherans, the element of fear in piety still more emphasized than in Calvin."¹⁰⁶ In a word, with all his emphasis on the sovereignty of God, Calvin throws an even stronger emphasis on His love: and his doctrine of God is preëminent among the doctrines of God given expression in the Reformation age in the commanding place it gives to the Divine Fatherhood. "Lord and Father"—fatherly sovereign, or sovereign Father—that is how Calvin conceived God.

It was precisely because Calvin conceived of God not only as Lord, but also as Father, and gave Him not merely his obedience but his love, that he burned with such jealousy for His honor. Everything that tended to rob God of the honor due Him was accordingly peculiarly abhorrent to him.

¹⁰⁶ Köstlin, as cited, pp. 424-5.

We cannot feel surprised, therefore, that he devotes so large a portion of his discussion of the doctrine of God to repelling that invasion of the divine rights which was wrought by giving the worship due to Him alone to others, and particularly to idols the work of man's own hand. His soul filled with the vision of the majesty of a God who will not give His glory to another, and his heart aflame with a sense of the Fatherly love he was receiving from this great God, the Lord of heaven and earth, he turned with passionate hatred from the idolatrous rites into which the worship of the old Church had so largely degenerated, and felt nothing so pressingly his duty as to trace out the fallacies in the subtle pleas by which men sought to justify them to themselves, and so far as lay within him to rescue those who looked to him for guidance from such dreadful profanation of the divine majesty. As a practical man, with his mind on the practical religious needs of the time, this "brutal stupidity" of men, desiring visible figures of God—who is an invisible Spirit—corrupting the divine glory by fabricating for themselves gods out of wood, or stone, or gold, or silver, or any other dead stuff, seemed to him to call for rebuke as little else could. The principle on which he proceeds in his rebuke of idolatry is expressed by himself in the words, that to attribute to anything else than to the one true God, anything that is proper to divinity is "to despoil God of His honor and to violate His worship".¹⁰⁷ So deeply rooted is the jealousy for the divine honor given expression in this principle not only in Calvin's thought, but in that of the whole tendency of thought which he represents, that it may well be looked upon as a determinative trait of the Reformed attitude—which has therefore been described as characterized by a determined protest against all that is pagan in life and worship.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ I. xii. 1: Quod autem priore loco posui, tenendum est, nisi in uno Deo resideat quicquid proprium est divinitatis, honore suo ipsum spoliari, violarique ejus cultum.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Schweizer, *Glaubenslehre d. rf. Kirche*, I. 16: "Only an essentially complete survey of the particular Reformed dogmas can lead to

Certainly the zeal of Calvin burned warmly against the dishonor he felt was done to God by the methods of worshipping Him prevalent in the old Church. God has revealed Himself not only in His Word, but also in His works, as the one only true God. But the vanity of man has ever tended to corrupt the knowledge of God and to invent gods many and lords many, and not content with that, has sunk even to the degradation of idolatry,—fabricating gods of wood or stone, gold or silver, or some other dead stuff. It is, of course, not idolatry in general, but the idolatry of the Church of Rome that Calvin has his eye particularly upon, as became him as a practical man, absorbed in the real problems of his time. He therefore particularly animadvertes upon the more refined forms of idolatry, ruthlessly reducing them to the same level in principle with the grossest. God does not compare idols with idols, he says, as if one were better and another worse: He repudiates all without exception,—all images, pictures or any the fundamental tendency to which they all belong. This can be represented as a dominating protest against all that is pagan"; p. 25: "Protestation against the deification of the creature is therefore everywhere the dominating, all determining impulse of Reformed Protestantism". (Cf. pp. 40, 59, and the exposition there of how this principle worked to prevent all half-measures and inconsequences in the development of Reformed thought.) Cf. also Scholten, *De Leer d. Hervormde Kerk.*, II. 13: "Schweizer finds the characteristic of the Reformed doctrine in the Biblical principle of man's entire dependence on God, together with protestation on the ground of original Christianity against any heathenish elements which had seeped into the church and its teaching. That in the opposition of the Reformed to Rome, such an aversion to all that is heathenish exhibited itself, history tells us, and cannot be denied"; p. 17: "The maintenance of the sovereignty of God is the point from which, with the Reformed, everything proceeds. Hence as well their protest against the pagan element in the Romish worship" . . . ; p. 151: "What led Luther to repudiate the intercession and adoration of Mary and the saints was primarily the conviction that the saints are sinners and their intercession and merits, therefore, cannot avail us, cannot cover our sins before God. Zwingli and Calvin take their starting point here, from the conception of *God* and deny that the love of *God* can be dependent on any intercession, and reject the worship of Mary and the honoring of the saints as a deification of creatures, and an injury to the sovereignty of God" (cf. also pp. 139-140: 16 sq.).

other kind of tokens by which superstitious people have imagined He could be brought near to them (I. xi. 1, end). He embraces all forms of idolatry, however, in his comprehensive refutation; he even expressly adverts to the "foolish subterfuge" (*inepta cautio*) of the Greeks, who allow painted but not graven images (I. xi. 4, end). Or rather he broadens his condemnation until it covers even the false conceptions of God which we frame in our imaginations (I. xi. 4, *init.*), substituting them for the revelations He makes of Himself: for the "mind of man", he says, "is, if I may be allowed the expression, a perpetual factory of idols" (I. xi. 8). Thus he returns to "the Puritan conception" which we have seen him already announcing in former chapters, and proclaims as his governing principle (I. xi. 4 *med.*) that "all modes of worship which men excogitate from themselves are detestable".¹⁰⁹

He does not content himself, however, with proclaiming and establishing this principle. He follows the argument for the use of images in worship into its details and refutes it item by item. To the plea that "images are the books of the illiterate" and by banishing them he is depriving the people of their best means of instruction, he replies that no doubt they do teach something, but what they teach is falsehood: God is not as they represent Him (§§ 5-7). To the caveat that no one worships the idols, but the deity through the idols; that they are never called 'gods' and that what is offered them is *δουλεία* not *λατρεία*;—he replies that all this is distinction without difference; the Jews in their idolatry reasoned in a similar manner, and it is easy to erect a distinction between words, but somewhat more difficult to establish a real difference in fact (§§ 9-11). To the reproach that he is exhibiting a fanaticism against the representative arts, he rejoins that such is far from the case; he is only seeking to protect these arts from abusive application to wrong purposes (§ 12, 13). And finally to the

¹⁰⁹ Ut hoc fixum sit, detestabiles esse omnes cultus quos a se ipsis homines excogitant.

appeal to the decisions of the Council of Nice of 786-7 favorable to image-worship, he replies by an exposure of the "disgusting insipidities" and "portentous impiety" of the image-worshipping fathers at that Council (§ 14 *sq.*). The discussion is then closed (ch. xii), with a chapter in which he urges that God alone is to be worshipped and only in the way of His own appointment; and above all that His glory is not to be given to another. Thus the ever-present danger of idolatry, as evidenced in the gross practices of Rome, is itself invoked to curb speculation on the nature of the Godhead and to throw men back on the simple and vitalizing revelation of the word of a God like us in that He is a spiritual person, but unlike us in that He is clothed in inconceivable majesty. These two epithets—immensity and spirituality—thus stand out as expressing the fundamental characteristics of the divine essence to Calvin's thinking: His immensity driving us away in terror from any attempt to measure Him by our sense; His spirituality prohibiting the entertainment of any earthly or carnal speculation concerning Him.¹¹⁰

In the course of this discussion there are three matters on which Calvin somewhat incidentally touches which seem too interesting to be passed over unremarked. These are what we may call his philosophy of idolatry, his praise of preaching, and his recommendation of art.

His philosophy of idolatry¹¹¹ takes the form of a psychological theory of its origin. While allowing an important place in the fostering and spread of idolatry to the ancient customs of honoring the dead and superstitiously respecting their memory, he considers idolatry more ancient than these customs, and the product of debased thoughts of God. He enumerates four stages in its evolution. First, the mind of man, filled with pride and rashness, dares to imagine a god after its own notion;¹¹² and laboring in its dullness and sunk in the crassest ignorance, naturally conceives a vain

¹¹⁰ I. xiii. i.

¹¹¹ I. xi. 8, 9.

¹¹² *pro captu suo*.

and empty spectre for God. Next man attempts to give an outward form to the God he has thus inwardly excogitated; so that the hand brings forth the idol which the mind begets. Worship follows hard on this figment: for, when they suppose they see God in the images, men naturally worship Him in them. Finally, their minds and eyes alike being fixed upon the images, men begin to become more imbruted, and stand amazed and lost in wonder before the images, as if there were something of divinity inherent in them. Thus easy Calvin supposes to be the descent from false notions of deity to the superstitious adoration of stocks and stones, and thus clearly and reiteratedly he discovers the roots of idolatry in false conceptions of God and proclaims its presence in principle wherever men permit themselves to think of God otherwise, in any particular, than He has revealed Himself in His works and word.

As we read Calvin's energetic arraignments of the sinfulness of our deflected conceptions of God,—the essential idolatry of the imaginary images we form of Him—and our duty diligently to conform our ideas of God to the revelations of Himself He has graciously given us, we are reminded of an eloquent picture which the late Professor A. Sabatier once drew¹¹³ of a concourse of professing Christians coming together to worship in common a God whom each conceives after his own fashion. Anthropomorphists, Deists, Agnostics, Pantheists—all bow alike before God and worship, says Prof. Sabatier: and the worship of one and all is acceptable, equally acceptable, to God. Not so, rejoins M. Bois:¹¹⁴ and there is not a less admirable spectacle in the world than this. Calvin was of M. Bois' opinion. To his thinking we have before us in such a concourse only a company of idolaters—each worshipping not the God that is but the God who in the pride of his heart he has made himself. And to each and all Calvin sends out the cry of,

¹¹³ In his *Discourse on the Evolution of Religion*, quoted by H. Bois, *De la Connaissance Religieuse*, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ As above, p. 36.

Repent! turn from the God you have made yourself and serve the God that is!

It is in the midst of his response to the specious plea that images are the books of the illiterate and the only means of instruction available for them that Calvin breaks out into a notable eulogy on preaching as God's ordained means of instructing His people (I. xi. 7). Even though images, he remarks, were so framed that they bore to the people a message which might be properly called divine—which too frequently is very far from the case—their childish suggestions (*naeniae*) are little adapted to convey the special teaching which God wishes to be taught His people in their solemn congregations, and has made the common burden of His Word and Sacraments,—from which it is to be feared, however, the minds of the people are fatally distracted as their eyes roam around to gaze on their idols. Do you say the people are too rude and ignorant to profit by the heavenly message and can be reached only by means of the images? Yet these are those whom the Lord receives as His own disciples, honors with the revelation of His celestial philosophy and has commanded to be instructed in the saving mysteries of His kingdom! If they have fallen so low as not to be able to do without such "books" as images supply, is not that only because they have been defrauded of the teaching which they required? The invention of images, in a word, is an expedient demanded not by the rudeness of the people so much as by the dumbness of the priests. It is in the true preaching of the Gospel that Christ is really depicted—crucified before our eyes openly, as Paul testifies: and there can be no reason to crowd the churches with crucifixes of wood and stone and silver and gold, if Christ is faithfully preached as dying on the cross to bear our curse, expiating our sins by the sacrifice of His body, cleansing us by His blood and reconciling us to God the Father. From this simple proclamation more may be learned than from a thousand crosses. Thus Calvin vindicates to the people of God their dignity as God's children taught by

His Spirit, their right to the Gospel of grace, their capacity under the instruction of the Spirit to receive the divine message, and the central place of the preaching of the atonement of Christ in the ordinances of the sanctuary.

It seems the more needful that we should pause upon Calvin's remarks on art in this discussion long enough to take in their full significance, that this is one of the matters on which he has been made the object of persistent misrepresentation. It has been made the reproach of the Reformation in general and of Calvinism in particular that they have morosely set themselves in opposition to all artistic development, while Calvin himself has been inveighed against as the declared enemy of all that is beautiful in life. Thus, for example, Voltaire in his biting verse has explained that the only art which flourished at Geneva (where men cyphered but could not laugh) was that of the money-reckoners: and that nothing was sung there but the antique concerts of "the good David" in the belief "that God liked bad verses". Even professed students of the subject have passionately assailed Calvin as insensible to the charms of art and inimical to all forms of artistic expression. Thus, M. D. Courtois, the historian of sacred music among the French Reformed, permits himself, quite contrary to the facts in the sphere of his own especial form of art, to say that Calvin "nourished a holy horror for all that could resemble an intrusion of art into the religious domain"; and M. E. Müntz, who writes on "Protestantism and Art", exclaims that "in Calvin's eyes beauty is tantamount to idolatry"; while M. O. Douen, the biographer of Clément Marot, brands Calvin as "anti-liberal, anti-artistic, anti-human, anti-Christian". The subject is too wide to be entered upon here in its general aspects. Professor E. Doumergue and Dr. A. Kuyper have made all lovers of truth their debtors by exposing to the full the grossness of such calumnies.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ See: A. Kuyper, *Calvinisme en de Kunst*, 1888; *Calvinism*, Stone Lectures for 1898-99, Lecture 5; E. Doumergue, *L'Art et le Sentiment*.

In point of fact Calvin was a lover and fosterer of the arts, counting them all divine gifts which should be cherished, and expressly declaring even of those which minister only to pleasure that they are by no means to be reckoned superfluous and are certainly not to be condemned as if forsooth they were inimical to piety. Even in the heat of this arraignment of the misuse of art-representations in idolatry which is at present before us, we observe that he turns aside to guard himself against being misunderstood as condemning art-representations in general (§ 12). The notion that all representative images are to be avoided he brands as superstition and declares of the products both of the pictorial and of the sculptural arts that they are the gifts of God granted to us for His own glory and our good. "I am not held", he says, "in that superstition, which considers that no images at all are to be endured. I only require that since sculptures and pictures are gifts of God, the use of them should be pure and legitimate; lest what has been conferred on us by God for His own glory and for our good, should not only be polluted by preposterous abuse, but even turned to our injury." Here is no fanatical suspicion of beauty: no harsh assault upon art. Here is rather the noblest possible estimate of art as conducive in its right employment to the profit of man and the glory of the God who gives it. Here is only an anxiety manifested to protect such a noble gift of God from abuse to wrong ends. Accordingly in the "Table or brief summary of the principal matters contained in this Institution of the Christian religion", which was affixed to the French edition of 1560, the contents of this section are described as follows: "That when idolatry is condemned, this is not to abolish the arts of painting and sculpture, but to require that the use of both shall be pure and legitimate, and we are not to amuse our-

dans l'Oeuvre de Calvin, 1902 (the second "Conference" is on "Painting in the Work of Calvin"); *Jean Calvin*, etc., II. 479-487; *Calvin et l'Art in Foi et Vie*, 16 May, 1900. Cf. also H. Bavinck, *De Algemene Genade*; also Article "Calvin and Common Grace" in this number of this REVIEW, pp. 437-465.

selves by representing God by some visible figure but only such things as may be objects of sight."¹¹⁶ Calvin, then, does not at all condemn art, but only pleads for a pure and reverent employment of art as a high gift of God, to be used like all others of God's gifts so as to profit man and glorify the Great Giver.

If we inquire more closely what he held to be a legitimate use of the pictorial arts, we must note first of all that he utterly forbids all representations of God in visible figures.¹¹⁷ This prohibition he rests on two grounds: first, God Himself forbids it; and secondly, "it cannot be done without some deformation of His glory",—in which we catch again the note of zeal against everything which detracts from the honor of God. To attempt the portraiture of God is, thus, to Calvin, not merely to disobey God's express command, but also to dishonor Him by an unworthy representation of Him, which is essential idolatry. Highly as he esteemed the pictorial arts, as worthy of all admiration in their true sphere, he condemned utterly pressing them beyond their mark, lest even they should become procurers to the Lords of Hell. We note secondly that he dissuaded from the ornamentation of the churches with the products of the representative arts;¹¹⁸ but this on the ground not of the express commandment of God or of an inherent incapacity of art to serve the purposes contemplated, but of simple expediency.¹¹⁹ Experience teaches us, he says, that to set up images in the churches is tantamount to raising the standard of idolatry, because the folly of man is so great that it immediately falls to offering them superstitious worship. And a deeper reason lies behind, which would determine his judgment even if this peril were not so great. The

¹¹⁶ *Opp.* iv. 1195. *Cf.* the parallel remark in the *Genevan Catechism* of 1545 (*Opp.* vi. 55): "It is not to be understood then, that all sculpture and painting are forbidden, in general; but only all images which are made for divine service or for honoring Him in things visible, or in any way abusing them in idolatry."

¹¹⁷ *Deum effingi visibile specie nefas esse putamus.*

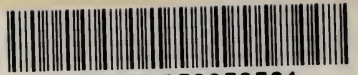
¹¹⁸ Ch. xiii.

¹¹⁹ *expediat.*

Lord has Himself ordained living and expressive images of His grace for His temples, by which our eyes should be caught and held,—such ceremonies as Baptism and the Lord's Supper,—and we cannot require others fabricated by human ingenuity; and it seems unworthy of the sanctity of the place to intrude them. There is, of course, an echo here of Calvin's fundamental "Puritan principle" with reference to the worship of God: his constant and unhesitating contention that only that worship which is ordained by Himself is acceptable to God. Had God desired the aid of pictorial representations to quicken the devotions of His people He would have ordained them: to employ them is in principle to despise the provisions He has made and to invent others—and we may be sure inadequate if not misleading ones—for ourselves.

This is not the place to inquire into Calvin's positive theory of art-representation. It is worth while, however, as illustrating the wide interests of the man, to note that he has such a theory and betrays the fact that he has it and somewhat of the lines on which it runs, in incidental remarks, even in such a discussion as this. It emerges, for example, that he would confine the sphere of the representative arts to the depicting of objects of sight (*ea sola quorum sint capaces oculi*)—of such things as the eye sees. Of these, however, he discovers two classes,—“histories and transactions” on the one side, “images and forms of bodies” on the other.¹²⁰ The former may be made useful for purposes of instruction or admonition, he thinks; the latter, so far as he sees, serve only the ends of delectation. Both are, however, alike legitimate, if only they be kept to their proper places and used for their proper ends: for the delectation of man is as really a human need as his instruction. So little does Calvin then set himself with stern moroseness against all art-representation, that he is found actually forming a

¹²⁰ A. Bossert, *Calvin*, 1906, pp. 203-4, after quoting this statement of Calvin's adds: "It is the program of Dutch painting", in this repeating what E. Doumergue in his "Conference" on "Painting in the Work of Calvin" (as cited, pp. 36-51) had fully set forth.



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comprehensive theory of art-representation and pleading for its use, not only for the profit, but also for the pleasure of man.

It remains to speak of Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity.
Princeton.

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Argentine
NOV, 11